

**Principals' Perceptions of the Essential Components  
of Sustainable Leadership and Implications for Succession Planning  
at the Elementary School Level:  
A Mixed Methods Research Study**

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By  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership at the elementary school level. The secondary focus was to examine principals' perceptions of present succession-planning practices to see if there were implications for succession-planning. The challenges of providing sustainable leadership in a context of rapid change, globalization, advances in technology, and demands for more accountability warranted further investigation.

Using pragmatism as a philosophical base the researcher determined that a Mixed Methods Research Methodology would provide the most fully informed answers to the research questions. A Sequential Exploratory Research Design was selected with a first phase that was primarily quantitative followed by a second phase that was qualitative. Methods employed in data collection were: development of a survey instrument and implementation of the survey in phase one and semi-structured interviews in phase two. The research was carried out in two urban school divisions and two randomly selected rural school divisions in Saskatchewan. A total of 50 principals from the four school divisions participated in the survey, 10 principals served on interpretive panels and 11 principals were interviewed.

The analysis of phase one included a statistical analysis of the responses to the closed questions and theme analysis to the responses for the open-ended questions. This was followed by the use of interpretive panels in each school division to provide further insights into the analysis. Semi-structured interviews in phase two were transcribed and member checks were completed. Theme analysis was then conducted. A case study

utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data was developed for each school division and a composite case study for all four school divisions. Joint display was used as a method to integrate data from the survey, the interpretive panels, and the interviews. This helped to establish the major findings of the study. A Kruskal Wallis Test revealed significant differences based on context, the principal's years of administrative experience, the principal's years of tenure as principal of this school, and the principal's gender.

Findings of this study suggested that principals value collaboration, shared leadership and alignment of school, division, and provincial goals. Principals believed teachers need more professional development in the area of data management, updated criteria for formal leadership positions need to be established and communicated, principals could benefit by formal mentorship, principals want more input regarding what professional development they will be offered and steps could be taken to encourage principals to remain in their position as principals.

Due to the small size of the sample the findings of this study need to be interpreted with caution. However, the four school divisions involved in the study can be guided by the findings of this study, as they work to strengthen sustainable leadership and to provide supportive succession-planning practices. This study can also serve as a guide for future research in the area of sustainable leadership and/or succession planning. This future research may include further refinement of the survey instrument.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

School improvement has been a focus in educational administration for decades. In recent years, researchers have lost faith in a model that depends on one leader. With the increased pace and complexity of schools, it has come to be accepted that meaningful and sustained progress in the area of school improvement will depend on the expertise of all staff within the school. This study will examine elementary school principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. As a secondary focus this study will examine principals' perceptions of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship in their school division. There may be implications for succession planning based on their perceptions of sustainable leadership. To date, sustainability has proven to be the *holy grail* of school improvement.

### Background

For several decades, the principal has been recognized as having a key role to play in school improvement (Fink & Brayman, 2004; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002). During the 1970s, "the theme of accountability surfaced for the first time" (Brown, 2005, p. 126) with a definite focus on practice (Oplatka, 2009). Questions of the day that reflected support for scientific management, focused on what educators should do to make their schools more effective in terms of student learning outcomes. This was gradually to



change as “some increase in the proportion of theoretical, conceptual and empirical articles at the second half of the 1970s” surfaced (Oplatka, 2009, p. 14). During the 1980s, the first wave of reforms, “top-down reform efforts from the state legislatures” (Brown, 2005, p. 130) arose, requiring a focus on instruction and student outcomes, and were to be put in place, as prescribed, by school principals. Principals were to be instructional leaders as outlined by effective schools research. Questions focused on how to find the best way to put in place the reforms suggested by the government of the day. As efforts to carry out the prescribed reforms were made, “conceptual pluralism” (Oplatka, 2009, p. 16) became evident, and both academics and practitioners became aware of the fragmentation within educational administration. Since the mid 1990s, school leadership research has converged on leadership for sustainable school improvement (Crawford, 2009; Davies, 2007a; Day, 2007). Oplatka (2009) described the changing context as one in which the dominance of quantitative research was refuted, the dichotomy between research and practice was resolved through *hybridization*, and the recognition of a need for a period of renewal and improvement arose. “Theory was no longer positioned in front of practice, but as an indispensable means to improve it” (Oplatka, 2009, p. 21). All of these changes have resulted in a focus today on discovering how principal leadership can contribute to the process of sustained school improvement. The primary role of the principal “is that of change agent within their organizations” (Harris, 2003, p. 14).

As a result of globalization and advances in technology, the context for principals’ work today is undergoing unprecedented and rapid change (DfES, 2007; Harris, 2008; Hopkins, 2001). Contemporaneously, there is a growing demand from the

public for a higher level of accountability for all students' learning and increased pressure to meet imposed short-term goals as part of standardized reform. Internationally, most schools have an increasingly diverse student population, and in many instances, there is also an increased rotation within leadership assignments (Gurr et al., 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Normore, 2004).

The type of school leadership required in schools today is very different and more complex than in previous decades (Brown, 2005; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2008; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Normore, 2004). "The school leader's job is complex and demanding and is becoming more demanding with each passing year" (Whitaker, 2003, p. 50). Principals are expected to work collaboratively with teachers, parents, and students; and serve as a facilitator who nurtures leadership skill development on all fronts. Mulford and Silins (2003) and others claim the magnitude of change required is major (DfES, 2007) and involves the assistance of all teachers. "A new model of leadership is emerging, one that recognizes the limitations of an approach to organizational change and development premised upon the efforts of just one person" (Harris & Day, 2003, p. 97). Under the pressure of ongoing, multiple demands, some principals have reverted to management of a system agenda (Day, 2007; Hargreaves, Moore, & Fink, 2008).

The principalship is often viewed as dealing with overwhelming expectations (Chirichello, 2004; Whitaker, 2003) and fewer teachers are indicating an interest in becoming a school principal or a willingness to apply to be a school principal (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2002; Phillips, Raham, & Renihan, 2003; Whitaker, 2003). Some principals view the position of principal, as a stepping-stone that allows them to build prerequisite skills for other positions in education or, potentially,

beyond. These principals are described as having a *post-modern portfolio approach* (Flintham, 2004, 2008; Southworth, 2007)—one where credentials are seen as more important than depth of experiences in the work undergirding them. In addition to a diminishing application pool, there is also an escalating rate of retirement as *Baby Boomers* approach the age of sixty-five (Day, 2007; Fullan, 2005a; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). An increased number of principals are choosing to retire early (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hargreaves, 2005a) often citing stress as the main cause for their decision (Sousa, 2003). The challenges of meeting the needs of this accelerated pace of succession, has resulted in an urgency to take a proactive stance regarding succession planning (Blakesley, 2008; DfES, 2007; Normore, 2004; Southworth, 2007).

There is a need for research in the area of sustainable leadership and the implications for succession planning (Day, 2007; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood, & Kington, 2008; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Harris, 2008). A closer look at the essential components involved would lead to a better understanding of how principals can work effectively to motivate others and to sustain commitment (Day, 2007). Yet, to date, “little attention has been paid to leadership succession as a mechanism directly impacting on school improvement” (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005, p. 15). Limited research has been conducted to discover why principals choose to remain as principals or decide to leave prior to retirement (Earley, Weindling, Bubb, & Glenn, 2009).

Accelerating turnover of principals, resulting from the aging of the “baby boom” generation and the pressures of the standardization agenda, have created additional difficulties that threaten the sustainability of school improvement

efforts and undermine the capacity of incoming and outgoing principals to lead their schools. (Fink & Brayman, 2004, p. 447)

The confluence of these four issues—a context of rapid change and increased accountability, the trend to reversions to managerialism, reluctance on the part of teachers to take on long-term leadership roles, and increasing attrition rates among active principals—has resulted in a problem. It is extremely difficult to ensure a pipeline of educators willing to step forward and serve as elementary school principals who will provide leadership for sustainable school improvement. In response, researchers of sustainable leadership for school improvement have advocated for increased attention to succession planning.

Assuming that researchers in the area of sustainable leadership are correct in their assessment of the present context for school leadership at the elementary school level, to what extent are the perceptions of principals consistent with these theoretical perceptions? Do elementary school principals know the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement? Are they aware of additional essential components of sustainable leadership? Within their school context, which of the essential components do they find most useful? Do they have a personal preference for which of the essential components they find more helpful in providing sustainable leadership? Can elementary school principals describe succession-planning practices in their school division? Based on principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership are there implications for succession planning?

## **Rationale and Research Questions**

Undergirding this study was the assumption that there are known essential components that affect sustainable leadership for school improvement; essential components attributed to the work of Fullan (2005a), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Davies (2007b), Leithwood et al. (2008) and others. Assumed components (such as *having a vision, building internal capacity, and establishing internal accountability*) have been researched and confirmed as contributing to sustainable leadership for school improvement. This being the case, this study examined the perceptions of principals related to these known essential components of sustainable leadership for principals working at the elementary school level in four school divisions. In phase one, a survey focusing on essential components of sustainable leadership was sent to all principals in four school divisions. This survey included both open and closed questions. Following analysis of the responses by the researcher members of interpretive panels were asked to provide further insights. During phase two, a purposive sample, primarily selected on strength of beliefs around sustainable leadership, was interviewed in order to elicit a more in-depth understanding of principals' perceptions of sustainable leadership for school improvement in their school division.

The primary focus of this study was to investigate principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. The researcher intended to examine common essential components valued by many principals and to explore diverse components identified by individual principals within the study. The results of the research on this focus provided a profile of the essential components of sustainable leadership presently utilized by principals in their work within four school divisions and

may provide guidance for future efforts. The secondary focus of this study examined principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship. The findings of this secondary focus may have implications for future succession planning in these four school divisions. The combined findings of this study may also serve as the initial development phase of an instrument to assess sustainable leadership provided by elementary school principals within the Saskatchewan context and implications for succession-planning practices.

This research study looked at two research questions:

1. What are principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship?
  - a. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on school context?
  - b. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's years of administrative experience?
  - c. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's tenure as principal of this school?
  - d. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's gender?
2. What are principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship?
  - a. In light of principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement what are the implications for succession planning?

### **Significance of This Study**

Firestone and Riehl (2005) identified “educational leadership research has rarely investigated the impact of leadership on learning outcomes” (p. 6). Fullan and Sharratt (2007) recognized “there are very little direct data available in the literature on what leaders in given systems think about in relation to the concept of sustainability” (p. 125). While more research has been completed within this area in recent years, this study has the potential to significantly contribute to the understanding of theory and practice, as elementary school principals share their perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement. Their responses may confirm or refute the prominent essential components set out in the existing sustainable leadership research literature. However, these responses may also put forward additional essential components that contribute to principals’ practice within the local context.

Rhodes and Brundrett (2005) indicated “information concerning leadership succession and succession planning within the educational research literature is sparse” (p. 15). As a secondary focus, principals will be asked to share their perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division for the elementary school principalship. These practices may be aligned or misaligned with sustainable leadership for school improvement.

Therefore, this study has the potential to contribute to the knowledge base of sustainable leadership and implications for succession planning. This study may be especially informative to the school divisions in which it is conducted. The results of phase one can be generalized only with caution to other similar settings as perceived by the researcher whereas the results of phase two will depend on the reader’s transferability

to what the reader sees as similar settings. This study may result in the initial development phase of an instrument to assess sustainable leadership, as provided by elementary school principals in the Saskatchewan context, and implications for succession-planning practices.

### **Definitions and Their Application for This Study**

The definitions outlined below were employed in this study.

#### **Adaptive change.**

Adaptive change involves solving problems when solutions are not currently known (Fullan, 2005a). For the purposes of this study it is important to recognize the pace of change in schools is rapid and schools are facing ongoing adaptive changes.

#### **Capacity building.**

Capacity building has been defined as “developing the collective ability—dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation and resources—to act together to bring about positive change” (Fullan, 2005a, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, participants will be asked to share their perceptions of how they lead staff in their school to work collectively to improve student achievement so that all students are successful.

#### **Distributed leadership.**

Distributed leadership has been defined as “a web of leadership activities and interactions stretched across people and situations” (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006b, p. 46); “the *organizational circuitry* that will ensure the fast flow of innovation and change” (Harris, 2008, p. 74). For the purposes of this study, principals



will be asked to share evidence that indicates leadership focused on instruction is being distributed within their school, between schools and within the school division.

### **Emotional intelligence.**

Emotional intelligence includes knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (Goleman, 1995, pp. 43–44). For the purposes of this study, participants will be asked to share their perceptions of emotional intelligence and how the various components do or do not contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement.

### **Essential components of sustainable leadership.**

Essential components are the main means by which leadership provides for a culture in the school that results in the development of a deep understanding of learning, fosters a stimulating learning environment and provides for professional and public accountability for the outcomes students are achieving (Dempster & MacBeath, 2009). Further, when used effectively and adapted to the particular context, the interactions between the essential components, has a result that equals more than the sum of the parts. For the purpose of this study, principals will be asked to share their perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement.

### **Leadership succession.**

“Leadership succession is the process of transition occurring between a new leader’s appointment and the end of his or her tenure as a principal” (MacMillan, 1996, as cited by Fink & Brayman, 2004, p. 431). For the purposes of this study, principals will be asked to share their perceptions of succession-planning practices (including those

around leadership succession) in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship.

### **Learning organization.**

A learning organization is “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (Senge, 2006, p. 14). In sustainable school improvement literature the learning organization includes all professional and non-professional staff as well as parents and students. The researcher prefers the term learning organization as representing a wide range of involvement at multiple levels within a system; beyond the connotation of the term professional learning community, which often focuses on one school. For the purposes of this study the ways principals can enhance progress towards their school becoming part of a learning organization will be considered as contributing to sustainable leadership. Principals will be asked to share their perceptions regarding the importance they place on their school becoming part of a learning organization and the strategies they use in their own leadership. Of particular interest will be how principals support and nourish both lateral relationships between schools and vertical relationships within the school division. Further exploration of the learning organization will be found within the sustainable leadership section of the literature review.

### **Mixed methods research.**

Mixed methods research is “research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). This study will employ a mixed-methods research structure.

### **Moral purpose.**

Moral purpose is acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of students (Fullan, 2001). For the purposes of this study, moral purpose will include making a difference in the academic as well as the life chances of students.

### **School improvement.**

School improvement has been defined as “a strategy for achieving positive educational change that focuses on student achievement by modifying classroom practice whilst simultaneously adapting the management arrangements within the school to support teaching and learning” (Hopkins, 2001, as cited by Hopkins & Jackson, 2003, p. 86). For the purposes of this study, principals will be asked to share their perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement.

### **School leadership.**

“The work of mobilizing and influencing others to articulate and achieve the school’s shared intentions and goals” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p. 14). For the purposes of this study, school leadership will not be restricted to those holding a formal leadership position.

### **Sustainable leadership.**

“Sustainable leadership is made up of ... [essential components] that underpin the longer-term development of the school. It builds a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success that is accessible to all” (Davies, 2007b, p. 2). For the purposes of this study, leadership will be considered sustainable if it meets the basic criteria as outlined in the research literature to date and highlighted at the conclusion of the second chapter of this dissertation.

### **Succession planning.**

Succession planning has been defined as having a formal process that spells out how districts will replace their leaders. The plan identifies critical leadership positions and communicates how the district prepares and develops individuals to become eligible for these positions when they are left vacant through retirements, resignations, and promotions. (Hall, 2008, p. 34)

For the purposes of this study, principals will be asked to share their perceptions of succession-planning practices, related to the elementary school principalship, in their school division.

### **Delimitations**

This study examined the perspectives of principals at the elementary school level in four public school divisions. This included exploring essential components that principals recognized as contributing to the principal's success or failure in the area of sustainable leadership. It was beyond the scope of this study to validate essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement, and specifically to validate the work on sustainable leadership or succession planning.

A purposive sample was utilized to select candidates to be interviewed in order to maximize the researcher's ability to "discover, understand [and] gain insight" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48) regarding sustainable leadership at the elementary school level. The criteria for selecting participants for the interview prioritized participants who saw sustainable leadership as an important focus for their work in the school and who have experience with this work. This assisted the researcher in delving deeper into principals' perceptions

of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship. The case studies developed by the researcher permit the readers to decide if their own situation is similar and consider what strategies may improve student outcomes in their school.

Answers to the research questions represented principals' perceptions from four school divisions at the time of the study. Data collection was carried out during one school term, a relatively short period of time. Therefore it will be important to interpret the results with caution.

The researcher's position as an insider or outsider undoubtedly affected the results of this study. The researcher's preference to return to the school division where she was previously employed resulted in the position of previous insider. As a former principal in the school division, this likely enhanced the researcher's awareness of small nuances of change within recent years. The researcher's credibility, may have affected the willingness of participants to share their perceptions, in both positive and negative ways. In other school divisions, the researcher represented an outsider needing to establish initial trust with all participants.

The timelines used for this research and their alignment with the school division timelines may have affected potential participants' involvement. A principal's first priority is to see their school is meeting the needs of their students. There are periods in the year when finding time for participation in this research may be viewed by principals as an external imposition. This likely affected the initial decision to be involved but also the quality of the responses from those who did participate.

In summary the delimitations included: this research did not include validating the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement or succession-planning practices put forward in the research to date, the purposive sample of participants interviewed prioritized participants who viewed school improvement and sustainable leadership as important, the perceptions of principals in four Saskatchewan school divisions were examined over a relatively short period of time, the quality of the data collected depended on the researcher's ability to establish trust with participants and there may have been unknown factors for each principal that may have limited their willingness to participate in this study. These delimitations likely affected the results of the study.

### **Limitations**

The researcher needed to establish trust with the participants. The plan to do this included a letter of invitation to participate so principals would be aware the researcher had previous administrative experiences similar to their own. This letter clarified the purpose of the study and how participants were to be involved. During phase one, participants were asked to share their perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement in their school division. Participants were also asked to share their perceptions of current succession-planning practices related to the elementary school principalship. In phase two, a purposive sample of those willing to participate in interviews was asked to share both cognitive and emotional aspects of their personal experiences that have led to their current perceptions about essential components of sustainable leadership and succession-planning practices related to the

elementary school principalship. The letter inviting participation indicated that their participation may result in a better understanding of the essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement and to succession-planning practices with respect to the elementary school principalship.

By taking school timelines into consideration, the researcher aimed to increase participation in this study. Surveys were posted on line for several weeks after the beginning of term two, so school routines were in place and principals felt more confident about the internal day-to-day running of the school. By scheduling the electronic surveys in February, the researcher also avoided the increased workload in schools focused on term reporting. The plan was to analyze results of the surveys, finalize the interview protocol, and choose the purposive sample while principals were busy with the culmination of the term reporting period. Interviews were scheduled to occur following the school's reporting period, once again aiming to solicit a greater willingness to participate. In addition, interviews were conducted at the school site, at a time convenient for the individual principal, to make participation more feasible from the principals' perspective.

Individual capacity of principals to engage in reflection likely had an impact on the outcome of this research. Participants were asked to share their perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement and current succession-planning practices within the elementary school principalship. System expectations may have had an impact at the individual principal's level. In addition, personal willingness to share reflections with the researcher may have had an effect on outcomes. Responses on the initial surveys may have indicated willingness and

ability to be reflective. Initial screening of candidates to be included in the interviews may have helped to partially alleviate this potential problem. However, each principal determined if they were willing to respond in an honest, open and thorough manner.

The developmental nature of the instrument used for the survey in phase one was also a limitation of this study. The survey was developed by the researcher based on the literature review that built on the research of others. However, during the early stages of the research, the survey was at an initial stage of development. As the study progressed, some of the survey findings were confirmed by the interviews that followed. However, it is also anticipated that this study will lead to further refinements of the survey and that future research will also help in the further development of the survey instrument.

In summary, the limitations included: the developmental nature of the survey instrument, the level of trust established by the researcher with the participants, the time chosen to conduct the study to avoid the busiest times of the year for school principals, and the ability of the participants to reflect on their work on sustainable leadership and their individual willingness to share these reflections. It was beyond the capacity of the researcher to completely control these factors. However, the researcher took steps to minimize the possible effects of these limitations by establishing trust with the participants, considering the work flow of the school calendar, asking probing questions to encourage reflection and providing a conversational tone during interviews to encourage a willingness to share reflections.



## **The Researcher**

The researcher's interest in sustainable leadership was sparked during her thirty-year career as an elementary school teacher and administrator. Early in this career as a teacher, professional development was typically comprised of personally selected areas of interest and follow-up affected only the individual teacher's classroom. While it was evident that many teachers wanted to improve their teaching, rarely was a school-wide focus established. It was also apparent that a change of principal could mean an immediate change of what would be considered an appropriate focus. Later, as a principal, the challenge of having teachers select a school-wide focus and then building the working relationships necessary to make progress as a united staff was a satisfying part of the researcher's career. An essential part of achieving this was to have teachers see that the benefits to students were sufficient to warrant giving up their individual autonomy to teach in their own self-selected manner within their classroom.

As a principal, a transfer to a new school meant an immediate threat to progress to date in your present school. Transition meetings between outgoing and incoming principals often made it abundantly clear that some initiatives would be dropped and were not seen as significant to the incoming principal. Although mentioned in planning documents, seldom were initiatives extended beyond the period of influence of the principal who started the initiative. Instead these initiatives were politely discontinued and new goals selected under the direction of the incoming principal. This reality was beyond the control of the outgoing principal. To principals who were passionate about school improvement, this could prove to be a disheartening process.

Particularly during the last eight years as a principal, the researcher talked to many teachers about their career plans. It became clear that some teachers with very appropriate leadership skills were very definite that they were not interested in applying for a position in administration. At a personal level, the researcher could see that work-life balance was becoming a bigger issue for principals. The demands on principals were growing at what felt like a frantic pace. These experiences left the researcher with unanswered questions. What would help people to see their own leadership potential and kindle a desire to develop it? What steps could be taken to make the position of principal more desirable in the eyes of teachers? How could the job description for the principal be updated? How could a school division attract and retain the best leaders possible?

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, the general purpose and the context for the research has been established. Research questions are stated and delimitations and limitations outlined. In chapter two, the researcher reviews two main areas of research that are closely tied to the research questions: sustainable leadership and succession planning. This review guided the researcher during the development of a conceptual framework for the study. In chapter three, the researcher sets out the methodology in detail including the developmental phase of an instrument to assess principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership as provided by elementary school principals in the Saskatchewan context and of present succession-planning practices. This chapter also includes an explanation of how mixed methods allowed a more in-depth look at principals' perceptions of sustainable leadership and the implications for succession

planning. In chapters four and five, the researcher presents the data collected in response to the two research questions. Chapter four includes responses to the electronic survey whereas chapter five the responses to the personal interviews. In chapter six, the researcher interprets the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected from the surveys and qualitative analysis of data collected during the interviews. *Joint display* (Lee & Greene, 2007) is used to link data from the two sources and establish findings for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

As the primary focus of this study the researcher investigated principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement. Of interest to the researcher were common essential components valued by many principals, as well as the diverse components identified by a smaller number of principals. Using the data collected, the researcher developed a profile of the essential components of sustainable leadership based on principals' perceptions in four school divisions in central Saskatchewan at a given point in time. The researcher was open to exploring unique essential components that emerged within any of the four school divisions during the study.

As the secondary focus of this study, the researcher examined principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship. The researcher wanted to know if present succession-planning practices supported or undermined sustainable leadership within the school division.

Two main bodies of research literature supported this study of sustainable leadership for the elementary school principalship. Sustainable leadership literature has progressed to current thinking regarding leadership for school improvement. Within this literature, known essential components identified include: doing what's right for students, taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals, encouraging peers to learn from peers, maintaining a cycle of positive energy, deepening learning

about instruction, developing leadership in others, changing the work context and culture, and working together to address accountability. Corresponding adjustments in succession-planning literature have also evolved to date. Together, *sustainable leadership literature* and *succession planning literature* lay the foundation for how new leaders can be encouraged, nurtured, and retained as effective principals who lead school improvement in elementary schools. This is essential in order to address the problem of ensuring a sufficient number of educators willing to provide sustainable leadership as an elementary school principal.

In this chapter, the researcher first examines the research literature focused on sustainable leadership. Next the researcher examines the research literature regarding succession planning in schools. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework developed by the researcher for this study and a brief summary of the literature presented.

### **Sustainable Leadership**

School improvement has been a prime goal in education for over a decade (Davies & Davies, 2006; Fullan, 2005a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). However, while pockets of success have been evident, little ongoing improvement has been found. Charismatic, school-based leaders have worked with teachers to effect change in schools and some have been successful in making short-term gains. However, this success has proven to be elusive, and research suggests that for the most part success does not continue long after the principal leaves the school (Fullan, 2009a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2006).

There has been an increasing demand from the public for equity in education (Fullan, 2005a; Schleicher, 2009). Taxpayers want to ensure that their tax dollars have a good return, and that all children have an equal opportunity to benefit from K–12 education. Due to globalization and increased technology, this demand has become an international concern (Levin & Fullan, 2008; Schleicher, 2009). Governments have recognized this demand and have introduced various mandated reforms. However, in spite of these efforts, educational achievement—although improved—has usually reached a plateau below the desired standard (Fullan, 2005a). Research has therefore turned toward *sustainable leadership* that many view as the key to sustainable improvement in education (Fullan, 2005a; Hargreaves, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The goal is improvement in education on a massive scale, where gains made can be more enduring and serve as a base for ongoing improvements in student achievement. It is the research in the area of leadership for sustainable reform that will now be examined.

Hargreaves (2009) outlined large-scale reform to date highlighting four broad ways of change. The First Way during the 1960's and 1970's, characterized by optimism and innovation, was a time when teachers exercised autonomy and small pockets of innovation appeared but failed to spread. During this First Way, school development gradually became a focus and school effectiveness studies emerged. Hargreaves described the Second Way, during the 1980's and the early 1990's, as a time when goals, performance targets, parental choice, and capacity building took hold resulting in complexity and contradiction. Hargreaves described the Third Way, which featured standardization and marketization, as bringing forward top-down performance targets, but as giving more recognition to the importance of support through capacity building

and networking with peers. The Fourth Way, since the mid 1990's, has intensified government expectations combined with professional involvement and public engagement. It is in this Fourth Way that Hargreaves believed could lead "education into an age of inspiration and sustainability" (p. 14). Hopkins (2001) indicated "the best of the current work on educational change is now coming from those who in the authentic spirit of action research are studying change as they are engaged in bringing it about" (p. 37).

Fullan (2009b) claimed progress has occurred; there are several examples of large-scale reform where there has been a deliberate attempt to change an entire system. This has been tri-level reform at the school, district or region, and state/provincial or national level. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in the United Kingdom provided researchers with "an opportunity to assess specific components of a whole system strategy" (p. 105). In Canada, the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) is "an example of being successful without necessarily being clear and articulate about its strategy" (p. 106). Fullan stated "strategic action focusing on whole-system reform began post-2002" (p. 104) but in some cases is showing great promise and some early results. He described this development in the following way:

There is more convergence, but not consensus; debates are more about how to realize system reform, not so much what it is. Thus, everyone agrees that high quality teachers are critical, and that leaders and teachers working together focusing on student learning and achievement is essential. But there are sharp differences concerning the policies and strategies for reaching these outcomes. (p. 107)

To date research in large-scale reform has been most actively conducted in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Fullan (2006) confirmed that researchers of international renown have been learning from each other and gradually building a better understanding of the leadership required that they believe has the potential to result in ongoing, large-scale reform. The eight essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement put forward by Fullan (2005a) are recurring themes within the work of many of these researchers. As established by Leithwood and Day (2007), Leithwood and Riehl (2005), and Leithwood et al. (2008) these essential components can be further categorized into four core-leadership practices that contribute to success. A few researchers such as Day and Leithwood (2007) or Newman, Leithwood, and Pedwell (2008) have also included coalition building or securing accountability as a fifth core-leadership practice. However, they indicate that to date there is not as much evidence to support this as a separate dimension. Bennis (2004) in reflecting on recent political events clearly emphasized “coalition building is one of the essential competencies of all leaders—in some ways, the defining one” (p. 335). Further research regarding this dimension of leadership may be needed to better understand its useful application in our educational systems today.

Michael Fullan has an international reputation as a researcher in the area of educational change. He has been involved in Canadian educational research, has published prolifically in the area of educational change, has been an active presenter at international conferences and has served as consultant for many research projects over the course of several decades. Recently, he was involved in the evaluation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in the United Kingdom—perhaps the largest extended



study of improving student learning. Fullan's extensive experience has contributed to the development of his strong ability to synthesize current knowledge related to sustainable leadership for school improvement.

Fullan built on the work of many researchers around the world and utilized examples from the research done in the United Kingdom under the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* (NLNS) a result of *Every Child Matters*, from initiatives in the United States called *No Child left Behind* (NCLB), from the *Literacy Collaborative* in the York Region School District in Ontario, and from the *Literacy and Numeracy Initiative* across school divisions in Ontario. Fullan's (2005a) synthesis resulted in eight essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement that the researcher has adapted to serve as an organizer for the literature review of sustainable leadership that follows. However, under each of these adapted headings, the researcher will outline broad areas of agreement and difference between researchers working in the area of essential components for sustainable leadership. Fullan (2009b) predicted a "widening and deepening of system reform—not just education systems, but the *whole* system. Non-school factors which have a major impact on school performance must be included" (p. 111).

### **Doing what's right for students.**

Elmore (1999), whose work focused on instructional improvement in Community School District Two, New York City, found the primary focus in schools must be on improving teaching and learning. He indicated that loose coupling results in the present system where teachers who control instruction, basically work in isolation. For "successful instructional practices, that grow out of research or exemplary practice," (p.

2) to take effect, schools must become “tightly focused on the core function of teaching and learning” (p. 4). Hopkins (2001), based on two decades of research on school improvement in most European countries, parts of the former Soviet Union, North America, and Australia and serving as Chief Advisor on School Standards at the Department for Education and Skills in the United Kingdom, supported an “unrelenting focus on student achievement and learning”(p. 185). Similarly, Fullan (2005a) described the moral purpose as how all students are to be given the opportunity to maximize their learning in a school where there is a commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap in student learning. In addition, Davies (2008) agreed with learning being a top priority and described “a culture focused on moral purpose and the educational success of all students” (Davies, 2007b, p. 11). In a similar vein, Dempster and MacBeath (2009) on concluding their three year Leadership for Learning Project in seven countries emphasized “the moral purpose of education—enhancing the lives of learners” (p. 183) underpins leadership for learning. Harris (2008) alleged the new philosophy demanded “students came first in every aspect of decision making” (p. 84). Walker (1998) affirmed “one of the most important functions of an educational leader is to enlist others to help facilitate the best interests of children” (p. 13).

The ability to establish a common vision and set direction is an essential skill for successful leaders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Fullan, 2005a; Hargreaves, 2009). Elmore (1999), Davies (2007a), and Leithwood and Riehl (2003) each found that the principal needs to facilitate a process for staff to develop a common vision for improvement of instruction in their school. Staff may also agree on values that will guide them throughout this process. Initially it is important to select only

a small number of goals that “are likely to resonate with the local schools” (Fullan, 2009a, p. 281).

Many researchers have agreed that initial efforts for school improvement need to give priority to numeracy and literacy (Elmore, 1999; Fullan, 2006, 2007; Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Davies and Davies (2006) emphasized there is considerable skill required “to choose which external initiatives to implement which would complement the schools’ own agenda for improvement” (p. 128). Hopkins (2001) specified the criteria for considering a new initiative always includes whether it has the potential to improve student learning. All initiatives need to be coherent with the school’s vision or teachers will experience overload and fragmentation. Hargreaves and Fullan (2009), while commenting on today’s educational change agenda, considered the ability to prioritize when they raised the question:

How do we do the right things well, not get distracted by the wrong things, involve and include everyone who is affected, keep the momentum and the impact going, and prevent burnout by ensuring the change agenda is manageable and coherent? (p. 3)

It is important that school leaders have a concern for the success of staff and students beyond their own school. Fullan (2001) considered collateral damage; Hargreaves and Fink (2004) found that sustainable leadership needed to be socially just. Leaders need to be aware of how their actions affect those within neighbouring schools. “Sustainable improvement contributes to the growth and the good of everyone, instead of fostering the fortunes of the few at the expense of the rest” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 694). Similarly, Davies (2007b) stressed the importance of doing no harm to those in

other schools and communities. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Fullan (2005a) specified lateral capacity building would encourage a concern not only for the leader's own school but also for other schools within the community.

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) asserted “supporting and maintaining those aspects of teaching and learning that are deep and that foster sophisticated understanding and lifelong learning define the core of sustainable education” (pp. 694–695). Hopkins (2001) emphasized a strong learning program is about far more than test results and “subsumes a range of cognitive and affective processes and outcomes” (p. 71). Fullan (2006) stressed we must “elevate emotional safety and development as a crucial foundational goal meshed with cognitive achievement” (p. 48). Better management of student behaviour was acknowledged as one of four actions successful turnaround schools utilize according to a National Audit Office Report published in 2006 in the United Kingdom (cited by Fullan, 2006, p. 19). Gu, Sammons, and Mehta (2008), who used quantitative methods to identify a sample of highly improving and effective schools for further investigation in their longitudinal study of the impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes, based on their preliminary findings, asserted “there is an important association between changes in the behavioural climate and improvement in academic results” (p. 54). Day (2007) stressed success goes beyond test results to include “positive personal and social outcomes, well-being, and equity” (p. 15). In addition Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Davies (2007a) declared love of learning, high-level thinking skills and problem-solving skills, while difficult to test, need to be taught in our schools.

Doing *what's right* for students requires all educators to examine the purpose of education and to help develop a common vision about what matters. This demands that

teachers examine closely what students need to learn and what teaching practices will best help students in this learning. The goal is to help all students to be successful in their learning. It is the principal's task to provide the leadership that ensures that this take place.

**Taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals.**

Fullan (2005a) and Davies (2007a) supported a dual commitment to short-term and long-term results. Fullan (2005a) suggested “governments and schools set aspirational targets, take action to obtain early results, and intervene in situations of terrible performance, all the while investing in the eight sustainability capacity-building elements” (p. 25). Fullan envisioned negotiations between the government and teachers in setting reasonable, achievement goals.

Today, government representatives use testing agendas to indicate educators are being held responsible for the learning of their students. Given the nature of political appointments these results need to be demonstrated within a three or four year time frame. Short-term results are closely monitored for evidence of improved student achievement and concerns about this practice have been raised. Davies (2007a) stated “external testing should provide a floor to standards and not be the ceiling” (p. 4). Fullan (2005a), Elmore (2004), and Davies and Davies (2006) each stressed the importance of investing equally in capacity building and accountability (more support and less pressure) as it takes time for educators to build the capacity to put effective changes in place. Capacity building is a non-linear process (Elmore, 2004, 2005; Fullan, 2005a; Fullan & Sharratt, 2007) and “each new level of capacity requires a period of consolidation” (Elmore, 2004, p. 15). As a result, Fullan (2006) supported a three-year term in order to

demonstrate a trend in student achievement results. Similarly, Leithwood and Day (2008) emphasized the use of pupils' *value-added attainment tests* over a three-year period with the same headteacher in post.

There is no overall agreement in terms of mandated short-term goals set by governments. While Fullan (2005a) and others accepted the government's right to mandate this type of accountability at the local school level, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) saw this as outside the expertise of the local government and best left in the hands of educators. Hargreaves (2007) took a firm stand against short-term targets set by governments. "Imposed short-term targets, endless testing and quick political wins at the cost of deep learning for all students are the enemy of educational sustainability" (p. 223). He also expressed concern about "the all consuming curriculum of literacy and numeracy" (p. 224) taking away from "deep, broad and lifelong learning" (p. 224). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) acknowledged there may be rare circumstances when mandated targets may be necessary. However, they stated mandated external goals indicated a lack of trust in educators and were far better negotiated with teachers. Short-term goals of three years or less were often impossible to meet and were viewed as counter-productive. Hargreaves (2009) believed externally imposed targets discourage the development of distributed leadership and in turn drive people away from assuming formal leadership roles. Principals need to "learn to be critical filters for government mandates rather than mere pipelines for implementing them" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 697). Hargreaves (2009) favored accountability through sampling and believed accountability by census was unnecessary. He clarified that in the past, standardization as

a result of imposed targets “increased coherence, certainty, and accountability, but at the price of innovation, motivation, and creativity” (p. 17).

Accepted or not, testing agendas are evident in almost all the developed nations in the world. MacBeath pointed out, “the tension for leadership is to manage the fit between the external policy world and the internal world of the school, between leadership for learning as seen by government and leadership for learning as seen by schools themselves” (142). Fullan (2007) pointed out educators need to keep both short and long term goals in mind and be sure to foster capacity building first and make judgments later.

### **Encouraging peers to learn from peers.**

The current educational environment demands that teachers accept responsibility for what students learn. Elmore (2004) and Fullan (2007) emphasized the development of strong internal accountability is a prerequisite to responding effectively to demands for external accountability. Fullan (2005a) stated “sustainability is very much a matter of changes in culture” (p. 60); to a culture that Hargreaves (2009) pointed out would be “a culture of trust, cooperation and responsibility” (p. 37).

Fullan (2005a) and Davies (2007a), among others, emphasized it is important that principals ensure a strong team with the right people in the right posts. Part of this process will include challenging poor performance and moving staff. Jackson (2000) indicated the challenge is especially challenging as principals usually lack the power to hire and fire and do not set their school budget. Whitaker (2003) pointed out that in countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States local school councils are involved in site-based management including the selection of teachers and head teachers. Therefore principals are investing considerable time “working with

parents and community members on collaborative decision making councils, interacting with the business community, and marketing the school” (p. 43).

Principals can provide opportunities for “building capacity from within” (Harris & Hopkins, 2000, p. 13) and “mobilize the collective capacity to challenge difficult circumstances” (Fullan, 2001, p. 136). Mitchell and Sackney (2006), whose research focused on how principals build a vibrant learning community for students and teachers, defined the three domains within capacity building as: personal capacity of individuals, interpersonal capacity among groups of individuals, and organizational capacity within systems. Fullan (2001) maintained teachers, as they learn to work together in new ways, will develop their “capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices” (p. 44). Within the professional learning community, Fullan suggested principals can model the desired behaviors such as reflection and dialogue, and help teachers to develop these skills. Dialogue about pedagogy, teacher practice, challenges, and achievements provide an opportunity for learning as individuals share their expertise. Fullan asserted genuine inquiry into teaching and learning can start by sharing teaching experience and can remain focused on what happens at the classroom level. It is through this dialogue that tacit knowledge becomes explicit and can then be utilized by the collective of teachers to solve difficult teaching challenges. Hopkins (2001) indicated teacher beliefs and understanding, their knowledge and their practice, all need to be examined in order to make informed decisions. Fullan (2007) emphasized this “purposeful interaction is essential for continuous improvement” (p. 139). The goal is “to foster, develop, and disseminate innovative practices that work” (Fullan, 2005a, p. 18). Fullan (2005a, 2006) emphasized educators must use capacity building not only for



change but also *with a focus on results* for student learning. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe in their meta-analysis of the impact of dimensions of specific leadership practices on student outcomes found “the leadership dimension that is most strongly associated with positive student outcomes is that of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development” (p. 667). In their study teachers in higher performing schools reported leadership within the school was more focused on teaching and learning, more able to provide a strong instructional resource for teachers and more active as participants and leaders of teacher learning and development. Fullan commented with respect to capacity building at the Rural Education Conference 2010 in Saskatoon that “the one factor that stands out as twice as powerful as any other is the degree to which the principal participates as a learner in helping figure things out” (personal communication).

During this process, principals will utilize a fluid form of leadership that will enable others to participate in action research, focused on teaching and learning. Structures may need to be adapted or changed to meet current needs of the staff as capacity develops. As teachers develop their skills they can make decisions in light of the school vision and how they believe they can improve student achievement. Capacity building provides the “opportunity for teachers to study, to learn about, to share and to enact leadership” (Jackson, 2000, p. 70). However, it is important to note that as Hargreaves (2005a) stated, “it is not equally shared leadership” (p. 172); much depends on the situation and the abilities of those directly involved. Similarly, Fry (2008) found the distribution of leadership responsibilities by exemplary principals depended on teacher strengths and the needs of the school. Hall (2008) declared “the extent of delegated responsibilities depends upon the experience and leadership maturity of each

teacher leader” (p. 36). Who leads in the given situation depends on expertise not formal position (Harris, 2008). “The focus of school leaders should be to build capacity—the ability of the school to respond to change—by creating a genuine learning organization which places a higher premium on people’s skills, imagination and capabilities” (Hartle & Thomas, 2003, p. 18).

Fullan (2005a) emphasized it is through collaboration within independent networks that solutions for complex problems will emerge resulting in innovations for improved practice. He recognized networking with colleagues from other schools is also essential. In this process everyone is seeking ways to improve teaching and learning, sharing what they know, and building on the ideas of others. Hargreaves (2009) valued networks for their ability “to spread innovation, stimulate learning, increase professional motivation, and reduce inequities” (p. 37). Teachers understanding how their work is connected to the work of others will gradually lead to the development of a *learning organization*.

“Distributed leadership extends beyond the staff to the students and the parents” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 700). Students have a responsibility for their learning and can also be involved in capacity building regarding their learning (Fullan 2005a; Hargreaves, 2009; Jackson, 2000). They can take part in decision making and help plan their learning, practice self-assessment, set targets for their learning, reflect on their progress, and guide teachers in how to help them learn. Findings of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) also supported student leadership. Through participation in student leadership students feel valued and become more motivated; this has an indirect effect on student achievement (Jackson, 2000).

Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) and Harris and Hopkins (2000) identified the importance of winning the cooperation and support of parents. Parent Councils provide a means for parents to get involved in the decision-making about school improvement. Harris (2002) emphasized the importance of taking the time to hear parents' points of view and for principals to be well informed in this area. Mitchell and Sackney (2006) described how principals work to build a "profound commitment to learning" with staff, students, and parents (p. 637).

In order for reform of this magnitude to take hold in a sustainable way, both lateral and vertical relationships will be necessary. Elmore (1999), Fullan (2005a), and others believed in order to be successful, change at the system level is necessary. Fullan (2005a) pointed out "it is not possible for districts to move forward over time if the larger system is not a partner in fostering the sustainability agenda" (p. 80). He argued that learning will need to occur at the local school level, across one school to another, and within a supportive system where everyone has a prime focus on improving teaching and learning.

Capacity building is crucial for success. Teachers, student, and parents need to be aware of the challenges being faced in the school and help provide ongoing support for student learning. Principals must maintain a relentless focus on teaching and learning and facilitate the opportunity for those with the teaching expertise to share their knowledge for the benefit of the collective. The principals must hold all accountable to a high standard and provide the support necessary to attain these standards. Principals need to foster distributed leadership focused on teaching, encourage a collaborative culture, and remove barriers that may impede progress. It is fundamental to school improvement

to engage in capacity building in an ongoing and persistent manner so that an ongoing cycle of school improvement can be maintained.

**Maintaining a cycle of positive energy.**

Leadership “is about energizing other people to make good decisions and do better things” (Mintzberg, 2004, as cited by Fullan, 2007, p. 300). Fullan (2005a) recognized “emotionally intelligent leaders live longer and more effectively in complex times” (p. 36). Moore (2009) declared emotionally intelligent principals, during a time of change, are more able to coach and support teachers. Fullan (2001) emphasized leaders who are effective, model enthusiasm, energy, and hopefulness and know how to foster the cohesiveness of the group in ways that people want to continue to work together. They know how to establish a trusting environment where teachers’ self-efficacy and confidence will be nurtured. Fullan and Sharratt (2007) and Mulford and Silins (2003) found a shared sense of achievement led to increased emotional energy that can then be used to work towards further improvement. Hargreaves (2009) pointed out “the art of spreading change is about building new relationships as much as disseminating new knowledge” (p. 35). “Leaders must be consummate relationship builders” (Fullan, 2001, p. 5).

Davies (2008) claimed the development of strong intra-personal skills is vital in order to support “the absolute necessity of both actively sustaining and renewing the passion in leadership” (p. 200). It is the passion to make a difference that helps move vision into action (Davies, 2007a). Principals in the course of their work appeal to the teachers’ basic need to make a difference in the lives of their students, Fullan and Sharratt (2007) saw strong indications that persistence and resilience are required by all those

involved. Davies (2008) asserted principals with personal resilience, a positive mindset, an ability to manage conflict, and openness to risk-taking are more able to provide ongoing leadership. Flintham (2004), investigating sustainability strategies of 25 successfully serving heads, used the metaphor of *reservoirs of hope* “from which their values and vision flows and which continues to allow effective interpersonal engagement and sustainability of personal and institutional self-belief in the face of external pressures” (pp. 16–17). Principals must have the courage to challenge poor performance, the ability to see opportunities and not just problems, and the capacity to try new innovative ideas. Leithwood and Day (2007) in their international study of successful principal leadership claimed principals were “passionate about their work, highly committed emotionally and highly motivated” (p. 196). Day (2007) confirmed: “to successful principals, just doing the job will never be enough” (p. 22).

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) stressed “sustainable leadership systems take care of their leaders and encourage leaders to take care of themselves” (p. 11). These systems recognize the dangers of excessive demands and diminishing resources. Many principals have expressed a concern about *work-life balance*. Davies (2008) raised the question: “while leaders support and nurture others, who supports and nurture the leader themselves” (p. 199)? Davies and Davies (2006) recognized possessing powerful personal and professional networks helps principals to weigh different perspectives about common issues. Flintham (2004) examined choices of heads to either continue to serve or to take early retirement during times of external pressures on school leadership with no guarantee of a successful outcome. He expressed the need for support mechanisms to help principals re-energize and to reduce the number of early retirements. Hargreaves

and Fink (2006) stressed the importance of offering support to principals as they work towards sorting out conflicting emotions during times of leadership succession.

Fullan (2005a) argued that principals must be aware of cyclical energizing. Positive collaborative cultures push for greater achievements; however, principals must balance times of intense effort with downtime, which allows for renewal. Fullan claimed, “what we need are combinations of full engagement with colleagues, along with less intensive activities that are associated with replenishment” (p. 26). Knowledge in this area will help to avoid improvements that plateau and individuals who burn out.

Hargreaves (2007) stressed the importance of valuing “people’s knowledge, experience and careers” (p. 226). As part of this, leaders take from the past what is valuable and build on it. Hargreaves valued mentoring as a positive example of doing this. However there will also be a need for “making tough and focused decisions about what to leave behind so there is space for innovation ahead” (p. 229). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Davies and Davies (2006) were of the opinion leaders in schools needed to know when to guide the school in planned abandonment. Davies (2007a) found that intuition, as well as rational analysis, is vital for the *critical skill of strategic timing* and for *strategic abandonment*.

The challenges of school improvement are often daunting both in terms of complexity and unceasing demands. Sustainable leadership is a demanding form of leadership leading to improved teaching performance in the classroom. The principal must help staff to build on the past when it is appropriate, but also to abandon past practices when it is more fitting. Principals must be experts in knowing when to apply

pressure to do more and when to back off and provide time for rejuvenation. Emotional intelligence will aid them as they do this not only for their staff but also for themselves.

### **Deepening learning about instruction.**

Fullan (2005a) and Hargreaves (2005b, 2009) found that effective leaders maintain a focus on deep learning that occurs at all levels. Both researchers suggested the use of *assessment for learning* as a powerful strategy where teachers, schools, and districts can engage in deep learning using both data and experience. Principals ensure that regular monitoring and evaluation of student achievement are conducted. Discussions focused on data will lead to reflection about pedagogy and inform future decisions about teaching. Teachers will gradually develop a culture where solving problems becomes accepted and a critical mass of leadership develops. Evidence-based decision-making will become the norm as teachers address areas of weakness within the instructional program and set future targets. Davies (2007b) expanded on how schools also need to cultivate the skills to establish their own success criteria. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stressed school leaders can “ask critical and constructive questions” (p. 4). “There needs to be commitment to scrutinise such data, to make sense of it, and to plan and act differently as a result” (Hopkins, 2001, p. 101). Fullan and Sharratt (2007) emphasized transparency, in sharing of practices and results, throughout this process.

Educational reform demands more than incremental change (Fullan, 2005a). Teachers are being asked to make major changes, not only to instruction but also to the system in which instruction is offered. Elmore (2000) emphasized principals and teachers must “redesign schools as places where both adults and young people learn” (p. 35).

The magnitude of change expected is large and these changes are *adaptive* in that learning what changes are required is part of the ongoing process. The challenge of increased learning by all students will require all teachers to seek solutions and to commit to their own learning. Fullan (2005a) described this as a culture in which *informed professional judgment* will help to bring about improved teaching and learning. The new culture will be a demanding culture, where basic tenets include: “hunger for improvement, promoting excellence, holding hope for every child” (p. 58). Davies and Davies (2006) promoted the setting of “key strategic goals which ‘stretch’ the organization to new levels of performance” (p. 130). Sharratt and Fullan (2006) and Hargreaves and Fink (2004) supported the need to recognize the value of diversity in learning, teaching, and leading. “Sustainable leadership does not impose standardized templates on everyone” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, p. 12). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasized making structural changes that enhance the conditions for improved teaching and learning. However, Jackson (2000) pointed out management structures for “organizational stability and efficiency” (p. 63) may need to be maintained.

Deep learning is an essential component in sustainable leadership for school improvement. There is a relentless focus on school improvement and an ongoing need to solve challenging problems that arise. Assessment for learning is one way to assess what areas of teaching and learning need to be addressed. As deep learning is pursued there will be a change in culture and there may be a need to change some school structures that are a barrier to this new learning. Principals have a role to play in making sure all teachers are involved in learning about instruction to improve student learning and that both the school culture and school structures are supportive of this learning.



### **Developing leadership in others.**

Fullan (2005a) found sustainable leadership guided by these eight essential components (doing what's right for students, taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals, encouraging peers to learn from peers, maintaining a cycle of positive energy, deepening learning about instruction, developing leadership in others, changing the work context and culture, and working together to address accountability) is the key to reform. Sustainable leadership, according to Fullan, should not only extend beyond the recent leader to the current leader, but also across to other leaders and schools in the district. If a system could develop a critical mass of this kind of leader, then the context for the challenge of sustainability would gradually change. "The main mark of an effective principal is not just his or her impact on the bottom line of student achievement, but also *how many leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further*" (p. 31). Fullan pointed out, that with the present high turnover in the principalship we rarely see this necessary kind of leadership.

Fullan (2005a) emphasized "leadership at all levels must be the primary engine" for sustainability (p. 27). Principals, while maintaining their formal authority as the recognized leader of the school, will need to model shared leadership. Leadership cultivated across the school teaching staff will allow the expertise of all teachers to be utilized to improve teaching and learning. Fullan (2005a) and Leithwood et al. (2004) pointed out total leadership within the school is the key. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006a) specified in a study conducted by Leithwood and Mascall (2008), as part of the Learning from Leadership Project in the United States, determined **"total leadership accounted for a quite significant 27 per cent of the variation in**

**student achievement across schools. This is a much higher proportion of explained variation** (two to three times higher) **than is typically reported in studies of individual headteacher effects”** (p. 12, emphasis in original). Leithwood et al. (2008) reconfirmed this finding that when leadership is distributed the influence on student achievement is enhanced beyond the influence of individual principal leadership.

Leithwood, Mascall, et al. (2007) conducted a study of different patterns of distributed leadership in a large school division in southern Ontario. In this particular setting, efforts to encourage distributed leadership had been in place over a ten year period prior to the study and were widely supported at both the district and local school level. Within the study, Leithwood, Mascall, et al. examined how the basic leadership practices of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program were carried out by those within the school organization. In their study many instances of *planful* distributed leadership were found related to main initiatives. However, they also found their occurrence to be “unlikely in the absence of the focused leadership on the part of the school’s formal leader” (p. 55). Leithwood, Mascall, et al. reported that teachers saw it as a principal’s responsibility to establish supportive structures and to monitor the progress of the group to ensure progress occurred. Their research affirmed “effective forms of distributed leadership may well depend on effective forms of focused [formal] leadership—leading the leaders” (p. 55). They also discovered that some leadership functions were only carried out by those in formal positions. “The functions most likely to be performed by informal and nonadministrator leaders were most likely to be managerial in nature, and less likely to entail direction setting functions” (p. 58). Leithwood et al. (2007) confirmed distributed

leadership resulted in a demand for more formal leadership to coordinate who performs which leadership duties, to monitor the work, and to provide constructive feedback.

In a further study, Mascall, Leithwood, Straus, and Sacks (2008), in discussion with 400 administrators in both elementary and secondary schools, explored the relationship between distributed leadership and academic optimism. Academic optimism was made up of three sets of beliefs: trust, individual and collective teacher efficacy, and organizational citizenship behaviour. Taking into consideration a very low response rate and the use of two forms of the survey, Mascall et al. found “higher levels of teachers’ academic optimism were positively and significantly associated with planfully aligned forms of leadership distribution” (p. 224). Mascall et al. encouraged further research to investigate *planful* patterns of leadership distribution in practice. It may be through “supporting each other in a trustful, collaborative and confident manner” (p. 225) that distributed leadership can lead to sustainable school improvement.

Wahlstrom and Seashore Louis (2008) examined how interactions found between the teachers and the principal within shared leadership or a professional community affected instruction. These researchers indicated “at this point we still do not yet have a clear depiction of how leadership and teacher relationships interact and to what effect, if any, those interactions may have as variables affecting instructional practices in schools” (p. 467). Their study focused on these interactions. Findings suggested reflective dialogue, peers observing colleagues teach, and shared norms have a significant effect on teaching practice at all levels of schools, with an enhanced effect at the elementary school level. Wahlstrom and Louis found that *collective responsibility* (a belief by teachers that they can influence student learning and have an obligation to do so) has a more

significant effect at the elementary school level. Wahlstrom and Louis reported shared leadership was found to have a significant effect in all settings. However, the study revealed particular aspects within shared leadership and professional communities had different effects, significant or insignificant, on contemporary classroom practices, focused instruction, and flexible grouping practices. Wahlstrom and Louis also discovered differences in use of effective instructional practices based on gender and years of teaching experience. Contrary to predictions based on their literature review, trust between teacher and principal did not contribute to improved instruction practices. While recommending continued research regarding the interactions between principals and teachers, the Leadership from Learning Project, will continue to explore these interactions in more depth. Wahlstrom and Louis indicated that at first glance the evidence suggested shared leadership and professional community are necessary conditions for sustainable leadership for school improvement.

Day, Leithwood, and Sammons (2008) reported teachers perceive the principal's leadership as "the major driving force which underpins their schools' increased or sustained effectiveness and improvement" (p. 84). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Day, Sammons, et al. (2008) pointed out much of the principal's influence on student learning is indirect. "School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions" (Leithwood et al., 2006a, p. 10). Leithwood and Mascall (2008) established that teacher motivation and work setting were more susceptible to leadership influence than capacity. They argued "collective leadership does explain significant variation in student achievement across schools" (p. 554). However their provisional insights led them to

express some concerns about the present overwhelming support for distributed leadership. Leithwood and Mascall saw limited evidence that parents or students had much influence. In addition “teachers perceived influence to be exercised in their schools in a distributed but still hierarchical manner” (p. 551). They believed further research was necessary in order to better understand distributed leadership and to make decisions about its application in schools. Leithwood and Mascall declared that at present there is “no empirical justification for advocating more planful distribution of leadership as a strategy of organizational improvement beyond those important efforts to enlist the full range of capacities and commitments found within school organizations” (p. 557). Leithwood and Mascall acknowledged using a unidimensional measure of leadership, “limited to influence on decision making” (p. 554) that may have greatly impacted their findings.

Developing leadership in others is a critical component of sustainable leadership for school improvement. While much has been written to support the value of distributed leadership, only recently has there been research conducted to closely examine how distributed leadership works in schools. Collective leadership has been proven to have a larger impact on student learning than formal leadership alone. At this point it is important to further investigate exactly when formal leadership is best and when collective leadership is most effective. This will help researchers to indicate the most desirable level of distributed leadership for school improvement.

### **Changing the work context and culture.**

In an educational environment where ongoing school improvement is expected of all teachers, there will be no return to the way things used to be (DfES, 2007). Instead, as

improvements are made the context for teaching and learning will continue to evolve and therefore necessitate new understandings (Fullan, 2005a). “Commitment to research and inquiry and timely action and correction are crucial to all large-scale change efforts” (Fullan, 2006, p. 84). Penlington et al. (2008), who researched both direct and indirect influences of school leadership on student outcomes in improving primary and secondary schools in England, found “the role of the headteacher was crucial in fostering this culture of change” (p. 67).

However, “no one formula of effective leadership is applicable in all contexts” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p. 14) and plans need to be kept flexible in order to meet the local needs (Fullan, 2009a). Davies and Davies (2006) emphasized the history of the school and current lived experiences will add to the “uniqueness of a particular school environment” (p. 136). Factors such as school size, location, status, type, and stage of development also need to be considered (Day, Sammons, et al., 2008a; Leithwood & Day, 2007). Fullan (2007) commented on Elmore’s work when he stated, “Administrators at the school and district level are responsible for creating and nurturing, and propelling the conditions necessary to support, substantial individual and collective engagement in improvement” (p. 231). Principals will consider the past, present, and future of their school as they adjust their leadership style and select the best strategies (Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2002). “Solutions have to come from within the unique context” (Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 136). Fink (2005) voiced a similar statement when he said, “An understanding of how a school came to be the way it is provides an important contextual basis for understanding the directions it might need to take and some of the impediments in its way” (p. 93).

Elmore (1999) and Fullan (2001) agreed that the kind of leadership needed from the principal is in a state of flux. School principals, according to Elmore (1999), will be expected to guide instructional improvement and to model the learning they expect of others, while securing the necessary resources. Principals will facilitate distributed leadership so teachers can share their expertise with others and become involved in decision-making. However, Leithwood et al. (2004), in their extensive literature review of how leadership influences student learning, argued some functions may best be retained by the formal leader (i.e., setting direction or personnel matters) and some patterns of distributed leadership may be more effective than others. Elmore (2005) indicated this work “requires different knowledge and skills, and it entails different norms and expectations” (p. 140). Collins (2006) found great organizations require *Level 5 Leaders* who “are ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the organization, the work—not themselves—and they have the fierce resolve to do whatever it takes to make good on that ambition” (p. 5). This is in stark contrast to Flintham’s (2004, 2008) findings, based on interviews with 25 serving heads in England and later more extensive interviews with 140 heads in England and Australia. He identified a small emerging group of principals who exhibit a post-modern portfolio approach with a primary focus on personal career development.

Principals must develop their personal capacity to lead school improvement. Horvath (2007), who investigated the transition period of newly appointed principals, affirmed principals of today require strong skills in the areas “of delegating, overseeing, mentoring, coaching, [and] mediating” (p. 117). Sackney and Walker (2006), in their examination of how beginning principals engage in capacity building by fostering a

professional learning community, reported that “principals require skills in communication, group process facilitation, inquiry, conflict mediation and dialogue, and data management” (p. 347). Davies (2008) stressed capacity building will include “the leadership challenge of concurrently working on the operational imperatives while building a secure and sustainable strategic future” (p. 98).

The changing context will require increased levels of collaboration (DfES, 2007; Elmore, 1999). Elmore (1999), based on his research conducted in New York schools, suggested teachers who feel valued will be more willing to offer suggestions to address problems. It is through the sharing of their learning about teaching that teachers will be able to benefit from the expertise of others and refine their instructional practices. Elmore stressed this kind of interaction with other teachers will foster an attitude of seeing improvement as possible. Vertical relationships within the school district will support this learning and provide resources to teachers in a way that ongoing professional development, to refine teaching and to benefit student achievement, will be highly valued by all school staff. These findings by Elmore were later substantiated by the Independent Study into School Leadership in England and Wales conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (DfES, 2007).

As part of this changing context teachers will develop a new understanding of professional autonomy (Fullan, 2007). The professional responsibility to learn and utilize the best instructional practices will become more widely accepted by teachers. Dempster and Bagakis (2009) found, that in an environment for learning, the effective professional “is focused not only on teaching students and learning from them but also on teaching colleagues and learning from them” (p. 100) Elmore (2007) called this a new kind of



professionalism where the *shared* culture of teachers will “begin to treat knowledge of the profession as collective rather than individual” (p. 32). Collective expectations will influence individual teacher’s work values and commitments (Elmore, 2005). Davies (2008) described this new culture as one where staff will “take ownership of their school and take responsibility for its success” (p. 100). Leithwood and Strauss (2009) based on their efforts to turn-around underperforming schools in Ontario, described how “a sense of school-wide responsibility for student success began to pervade the professional culture of the schools” (p. 29). Fullan (2005b) suggested this process involves the opportunity for peers to learn from each other but also the development of a collective commitment to improvement.

Educators and government officials must cultivate new ways of working together (Fullan, 2005a). Government representatives want to demonstrate how their party will support demands for more equitable benefit from K-12 instruction. Some educators continue to denounce the increased involvement of government officials in the demands placed on teachers at the local school level. Many researchers (Davies 2007b; Elmore, 1999, 2002; Fullan, 2005a) see this as part of the modern demands on education and believe it is highly unlikely that these demands will vanish in our new *knowledge society*.

A great deal has been learned from the governments’ initial efforts to mandate educational change in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Although some improved student outcomes were evident, these improvements tended to plateau far below what was considered an acceptable standard. Researchers have recognized the need for both educators and government representatives to learn more about what is involved in large-scale educational reform. Leithwood et al. (2002), whose research

examined teachers and administrators responses to government accountability initiatives in Ontario, pointed to the negative feelings that arise during mandated reform and suggested the use of *commitment strategies* as more productive. The provision of adequate information, resources, and time; respect for teacher expertise and professionalism; and a reciprocal consultation with a focus on improving teaching and learning, in Leithwood et al.'s view, would result in more desirable outcomes.

Researchers such as Fullan (2005a), Hopkins (2001), and Leithwood et al. (2002), emphasized realistic expectations, on the part of both the government and the teachers, in order to build the supportive base required for raising educational achievement and closing the gap. Both teachers and government representatives must extend realistic goals and respect. Teachers who are valued as professionals by government representatives will have a far more positive attitude towards the upcoming changes. Positive working relationships can serve as a foundation for setting reasonable goals with suitable timelines and providing adequate supports like professional development, teaching materials, and planning time.

### **Working together to address accountability.**

Fullan (2006) described how effective 2-way horizontal and vertical interactive and mutual influence results in “*permeable connectivity*”. Participants benefit from vertical relationships by developing a better understanding of the system purpose and dynamics. They come to see themselves as connected to the system and come to recognize that they have the ability to help change the system for the better. Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) pointed out that ‘teacher leadership’ and ‘student leadership’ play “a vital part in fostering learning and sharing leadership” (p. 43). In this environment, a

sense of human agency thrives and leaders from different levels within the system “feel that they are pursuing a jointly determined agenda” (Fullan, 2008, p.60). Fullan (2007) emphasized that, when vertical relationships are carefully established over time, “governments can push *accountability*, provide *incentives* (pressure and support) and/or foster *capacity building*” (p. 236). In order to succeed, people throughout the whole system need to recognize they are involved in “a codependent partnership” (Fullan, 2005a, p. 21) and develop a “fuller appreciation of interdependence” (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 530). Both government representatives and educators need to see how their own actions can either contribute to the problem or to the solution.

### **Summary.**

Fullan (2005a) put forward his eight essential components of sustainability as an “integrated strategy for system reform” (p. 84). All eight of the above outlined essential components (doing what’s right for students, taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals, encouraging peers to learn from peers, maintaining a cycle of positive energy, deepening learning about instruction, developing leadership in others, changing the work context and culture, and working together to address accountability) are essential to generate the millions of change agents that will be needed to make sustainable leadership a reality. Fullan (2009b) pointed out successful system reform means powerful essential components are interacting and it is the interaction between the powerful essential components that results in change. “The main measure of an overall strategy is whether it is *motivational*—mobilizing a large number of people to spend their energy” (Fullan, 2007, p. 247). Penlington et al. (2008) argued principals have an indirect effect on student learning through the culture of teaching and learning they have

established in the school. Their primary role is “leading others in leading change and to the creation of cultures which combine high expectations of staff and students with high levels of care” (Day, Leithwood, et al., 2008, p. 94) “Unless central reforms address the context of teaching and learning, as well as capacity building at the school level, within the context of external support, then the aspirations of reform will never be realized” (Hopkins, 2001, p. 182). Sustainable leadership is a highly complex task that needs to change the culture of the school and adapt structures to better accommodate emerging needs.

### **Succession Planning**

Researchers in the area of sustainable leadership often comment that it is essential to have a succession plan that is closely aligned with the school improvement plan. Fink and Brayman (2006), Hartle and Thomas (2003), and Normore (2006) delineated how leadership succession planning included: leadership talent identification, recruitment, preparation, placement, induction, reward and recognition, and continuing professional development. Hartle and Thomas (2003) emphasized that the new models of school leadership “will have a significant impact on the leadership succession/leadership development practices adopted in schools” (p. 3). They affirmed “leadership development should provide many opportunities to engage in learning to lead” (p. 30). Within the sustainable leadership model, it is through the hiring and development of teachers that a school or school division assures the development of leadership skills appropriate for the leadership positions of the future. Those who gain confidence in their leadership abilities at the teacher level will gain the confidence to apply for formal positions of leadership

including the school principalship. Hartle and Thomas (2003) and Fullan (2005a) indicated efforts to support the development of leadership skills need to occur at the local, district, and provincial or national level.

### **The need for research for succession planning in schools.**

Research in the area of succession planning for schools has not been plentiful to date (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005) and many schools fail to address this important issue (Fink, 2005). Brundrett, Rhodes, and Gkolia (2006) described the educational research literature in this area as “providing only limited information concerning leadership succession and succession-planning practices within educational organizations” (p. 261). Early et al. (2009) pointed out “why heads leave or remain in headship is an important but relatively unexplored area” (p. 304). Fink and Brayman (2004) indicated there have been very few studies that considered succession from the perspective of the principal, or the school, and elaborated by stating they are unaware of studies that “address serendipitous transition such as sudden retirements, resignations and state interventions” (p. 433). This seems to be a particularly valuable comment, considering the nature of the present study.

### **Research for succession planning for business organizations.**

Horvath (2007), in his research on the transition period of newly appointed principals, found little evidence that educational organizations paid attention to succession planning. This is in direct contrast to the business research literature that pays close attention to succession planning, which they often label as talent management programs. Lamoureux, Campbell, and Smith (2009) declared succession planning can minimize leadership gaps within an organization and provide opportunities for employees

to develop the leadership skills necessary for future roles. Lamoureux et al. assert effective succession planning will increase “the bench strength of the company’s leadership pipeline... [and create] high levels of engagement and retention” (p. 5). However, their findings revealed that succession planning is new to most companies, and is often not truly integrated within company operations of performance management, leadership development, and recruiting. They found that without the execution of succession plans “companies are unable to prepare successors for future leadership positions, the bench strength of an organization becomes weak and leadership pipelines are truncated” (p. 11). Lamoureux et al.’s recommendations for effective succession plans included: having a consistent, transparent process that provides reliable assessment of talent on the basis of selected criteria; having the right people involved in talent review; and connecting leadership potential with the goals of the business.

Hay Group (2008), a global management-consulting firm presently operating in 47 countries, saw strong indications that “a strategic and wise investment in talent management pays dividends. At the heart of that lies the ability to recognize—and nurture—the long-term potential of your employees” (p. 3). They claimed it is essential to be aware of the *growth factors* that best predict long-term potential. Hay Group specified that the growth factors are deep-seated traits that affect a person’s ability to develop over time. Ability to think beyond the boundaries, curiosity and eagerness to learn, social understanding and empathy, and emotional balance were included as essential growth factors to be considered when choosing employees to promote into management positions. “It is these deeper, more personal factors (also known as competencies) that provide the foundation for performance at a superior level” (p. 5).

Hay Group pointed out these growth factors can be identified early in an employee's career and will be useful in a broad range of leadership roles. In all cases appropriate support and development are necessary to ensure employees will be successful. They stressed it was important that young employees with high potential be provided with experiences that will stretch their leadership skills. Similarly, Hartle and Thomas (2003) recommended the use of broad ranges of attributes aligned with the vision of the school because with the rapid pace of change it is increasingly hard to know exact future needs. They also underscored "soft skills' like emotional intelligence are greater determinants of potential leadership success than technical and cognitive skills" (p. 35). Hay Group (2008) indicated job-specific knowledge and experiences could be considered later when determining suitability of an employee for a specific position. Employees assigned a new role will need support in the form of on-going feedback and guidance in any areas needing further development. Hay Group claimed clearly defined criteria for specific roles and objective data assessing employee strengths and weaknesses are essential to effective succession management.

#### **Recent succession planning research for schools.**

Of late, there has been a growing recognition that careful succession planning will help to sustain school improvements (Earley et al., 2009; Fink & Brayman, 2004, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, 2006; Hartle & Thomas, 2003; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Reynolds, White, Brayman & Moore, 2008; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). Hargreaves (2005a) acknowledged, "leadership succession is not just a temporary episodic problem in individual schools, but a pervasive crisis in the system" (p. 164). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) expressed concern at the rotation of principals that often

results in unplanned discontinuity of school improvement plans. They also stressed the need to consider *outbound knowledge*, that would help to preserve past successes and keep initiatives going after the principal has left the school. In their longitudinal study in Canada and United States, Hargreaves and Fink saw positive examples of planned continuity or planned discontinuity that had the intended impact on school improvement. However, Hargreaves (2005a) emphasized, due to lack of planning, more frequently they encountered “discontinuity with the achievements of a leader’s immediate predecessor, and continuity with (or regression to) the mediocre state of affairs proceeding that predecessor” (p. 167).

Hargreaves (2005a) identified four areas where succession planning could better support sustainable school improvement: “sound planning, successful employment of *outbound* and *inbound* leadership knowledge, limiting the frequency of succession events, and preserving leadership in the face of movements toward more management” (p. 164). Hargreaves affirmed principals who are making positive changes need time to embed these improvements within the culture of the school—a process that he estimated takes five or more years. Hargreaves (2005b) expressed concern about an increasing rate of rotation of school principals that eliminates the gains of previous success and results in an increase in staff cynicism towards school improvement. Fink and Brayman (2006) alleged too often “the needs of the system clearly superseded the needs of the school” (p. 77) and that “schools themselves will need to assume increasing influence over and have greater voice prior to and during any succession event” (p. 85). Fullan (2005a) emphasized “it is not turnover per se that is the problem, but rather the *discontinuity of direction*” (p. 31). Leithwood et al. (2008) emphasized unplanned principal succession



often deters school improvement. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) contended “taking responsibility for leadership succession is essential to ensure that improvement efforts endure over time” (p. 56). Barber and Mourshed (2007) found top-performing school systems from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries provide effective instructional leaders by “getting the right teachers to become principals, developing instructional leadership skills and focusing each principal’s time on instructional leadership” (p. 30).

Talent identification appeared to be a necessary first step in the process of succession planning. Fullan speaking at the Rural Education Conference 2010, in Saskatoon, indicated it is important to look for “connectors who thrive when surrounded by others who are effective” (personal communication). The challenge is to identify who has “the ability, the patience, and the determination to become leaders of learning” (Fink, 2005, p. 146). Hartle and Thomas (2003) stressed having a clearly defined framework of leadership qualities in order to align leadership development with organizational needs, to provide a foundation for leadership development and to enable well-informed personal development. Pont et al. (2008) indicated “school leadership frameworks can help provide guidance on the main characteristics, tasks and responsibilities of effective school leaders and signal the essential character of school leadership as leadership for learning” (p. 3). Rhodes and Brundrett (2005), in a small study of head teachers’ and middle leaders’ perceptions at 12 schools, found promotions from deputy head to head within the same school could provide for continuity. In their study school size was seen as an important component affecting leadership development and in some schools leadership development was not actively perceived to be established. Hartle and Thomas

(2003) also found there were mixed beliefs about whether principals should select teachers they felt were ready for leadership opportunities or teachers should self-identify their interest in developing their leadership skills. Rhodes and Brundrett (2005) discovered succession procedures lacked clarity and perceptions about leadership development were mixed. They expressed concerns regarding “a danger of misplaced leadership claims and barriers to succession resulting in frustration” (p. 17).

In recent years, there have been fewer educators willing to serve as school principals (Brundrett et al. 2006; Fink & Brayman, 2004, 2006; Normore, 2006; Quinn, 2002; Whitaker, 2003). In addition to the retirement of the baby boomers, there have been an increased number of administrators taking early retirement, as well as a decreased number of applicants for advertised positions (Hargreaves, 2005a; Hartle & Thomas, 2003; Reynolds et al., 2008). The position of principal is not always perceived as a desirable position in light of the job complexity, increased work load, changing responsibilities, and stress caused by conflicting demands often related to accountability. “The fallout from the standards/standardization agenda has resulted in potential leaders questioning educational leadership as a career path” (Fink & Brayman, 2006, p. 62). Normore (2006) acknowledged “effective leadership has been redefined significantly and has caused recruitment and selection of school leaders to loom large as a significant barrier to improve schools” (p. 43). In response to the shortfall, Whitaker (2003) suggested “it is time to begin to modify and change the role of the principal. Nothing could be more important than recruiting and retaining principals to lead our schools in the twenty-first century” (p. 51).

Hartle and Thomas (2003) and Quinn (2002) believed schools need to take a proactive stance and build a leadership cadre. “It is critical that leadership talent management becomes a priority and starts at an early stage of a teacher’s career, in all schools” (Hartle & Thomas, 2003, p. 31). Rhodes and Brundrett (2005) and Brundrett et al. (2006) stressed the importance of developing the leadership skills of all the teachers in the school. They indicated the concept of *growing one’s own leaders* could motivate staff and increase staff retention. It is critical that principals recognize and value the potential leadership qualities of members of their staff. Brundrett et al. identified “the relatively neglected phenomenon of leadership succession in schools is now beginning to receive more attention” (p. 261). Their investigation in 70 diverse schools revealed active participation in decision-making and leadership development. Brundrett et al. found some evidence of legacy building in how existing heads were making succession plans that would provide for sustainable school improvement after their departure from the school. The narratives in their study pointed to the importance of shared understandings of the characteristics of leadership talent identification. Brundrett et al. also pointed out that a long-term view of future leadership needs was necessary. They found “leadership distribution, coaching, career planning and an active developmental relationship between the head and the deputy” (p. 266) can all be used to enhance school succession planning. Hargreaves (2009) supported the use of distributed leadership as a way to create pools of potential future leaders that would support the development of many leaders early in their careers.

Fink (2010) emphasized

the succession challenge is more than just creating a plentiful supply of potential leaders; it is about the creation of a supply that can meet the expectations of diverse locations, particularly rural settings and inner cities. The combination of younger generations' reticence to assume leadership positions and their passionate desire to maintain a reasonable life–work balance compounds the problem created by the demographic issues. (p. 69)

Fink indicated a need to align the nature of leadership expected with the goals, values and life choices of younger generations in order to ensure all schools are led by creative, dynamic leaders. Fink saw positive evidence of jurisdictions viewing recruitment and development as investments, moving from replacement planning to 'growing your own leaders', and hiring based on more general proficiencies with potential to become a leader. Educational leaders "must see themselves as leaders of learning – their own, their teachers' and other staff, and of course their students' " (p. 143).

Decision makers can ensure negative stereotypes and false assumptions are eliminated. Reynolds et al. (2008) conducted a Canadian study in four provincial school systems and indicated "schools need to use the entire pool of potential leaders to find those who are best able to serve the organization" (p. 39). They advised looking closely at practices and policies to see equal consideration is given to candidates irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation. In their work, Reynolds et al. found objective criteria were often accompanied by more subjective criteria, especially when trying to establish a fit between a principal candidate and a particular community. In addition, complex organizational rules often resulted in maintaining the *status quo*. Similarly, Hartle and Thomas (2003) stressed the importance of "unbiased data on

individual potential” (p. 11) to be used by decision makers when selecting leaders for formal positions. Normore (2006) emphasized there is a need to be “more open-minded about the types of individuals whom they believe can achieve success as school leaders” (p. 58).

Rhodes, Brundrett, and Nevill (2008) conducted a more in depth examination of perceptions of heads, middle leaders, and teachers regarding leadership identification and development practices in 90 contextually diverse schools. Focus group participants from 18 schools were able to make a clear distinction between the terms management and leadership. Participants in this study also agreed many teachers in addition to the head carried out leadership functions in the school. However, within the focus groups there appeared to be a lack of clarity around whether heads should indicate to teachers that they had potential leadership skills or teachers should self-declare their interest in developing their leadership potential. Focus groups also revealed a lack of identification of leadership talent early in a teacher’s career. Some heads spoke of relying on *gut reactions* in identifying those with leadership potential.

During phase two, Rhodes et al. (2008) used questionnaires to include participants from all 90 schools who confirmed 20 characteristics as being important in leadership talent. However, differences in the relative importance of different characteristics were apparent between heads, middle leaders, and teachers. Rhodes et al. pointed out further clarification around the relative importance of leadership characteristics would facilitate more effective succession planning. Over fifty percent of all participants groups identified *people skills*, *communication skills*, *vision*, and *respect of staff* as the most important leadership skills. However, there was no clear succession plan in place to

identify and develop these leadership skills. This study affirmed a lack of effective leadership succession planning that included assessment of individual leadership talent and well-targeted career development for talented individuals. Rhodes et al. identified by “locating leadership talent identification as the centre-piece of succession management, incumbent leaders can begin to create the school as an excellent training ground for leadership development, enabling supply, succession and continuity” (p. 332).

Riley and Mulford (2007) reviewed the work of England’s National College for School Leadership (NCSL), an example of leadership capacity building on a national scale. A strategy for enhancing the leadership of school heads resulted in the creation of the NCSL in 2000. Riley and Mulford pointed out a review of NCSL’s contribution to the development of leadership in public schools by the Office of Standards in Education (OSE) [OFSTED] in 2005. This review indicated few schools have a well-established plan to develop middle level managers and stressed the critical importance of developing effective leadership and management at all levels within the school. In response, opportunities to participate have been extended by the NCSL to middle level leaders. The NCSL has developed programs for leadership at five different levels based on previous experience and leadership aspirations of participants. Riley and Mulford affirmed that the “NCSL is now committed to distributive leadership and challenges the long-standing belief in the power of one leader” (p. 84). They claimed this stance is consistent with current research findings. However, Riley and Mulford expressed concern regarding the ability of the NCSL to prepare school leaders in sufficient numbers.

Garchinsky (2008) investigated the practices exemplary principals use to ensure continuity of the school’s vision and culture prior to leadership succession. In his

qualitative study, based on consultation with four recent finalists for the National Distinguished Principal Program, “exemplary principals attributed a major part of their successes to the employment of distributed leadership strategies” (p. 215). Garchinsky’s results revealed five common elements within the vision of these exemplary principals: the vision stressed learning by all students, data was used to ensure continuous progress, parents and community members were viewed as active participants in the learning process, the importance of providing students with meaningful learning experiences, and attention to teacher improvement. Garchinsky pointed out “exemplary principals acknowledged that they worked on a team, and came to rely on those team members to ensure the successful continuation of the vision” (p. 198). As steward of the culture of learning Garchinsky found exemplary principals developed good working relationships with all stakeholders, established day to day management procedures to ensure the smooth operation of the school, and ensure that the culture of learning expected learning by all—students, teachers, parents and the principal. “Principals set high expectations for growth in a culture of learning, but also provided high levels of support to meet those expectations” (p. 199). Garchinsky also discovered exemplary principals looked for ways to balance the culture and vision of the school with that of the division. Although principals were often the catalyst for change the “responsibility for continuing that change must be distributed with teacher-leaders” (p. 199). These principals believed that everyone is responsible for leadership. “Building that ownership ensures that these facets of a successful school will continue beyond the exemplary leader’s tenure” (p. 199).

Earley et al. (2009) conducted research on The Future Leaders, a leadership development program that is supported by the NCSL. The Future Leaders Program fast

tracks the development of school leadership skills and candidates for the program are recruited from present teachers, as well as former teachers. Since 2006, this program has included four cohorts who undertook summer training, of approximately two weeks, followed by full-time placement in an urban complex school with one half day per week devoted to additional training. The school head and one of four external coaches, who offered feedback and ongoing support, coached each candidate. Each of the four phases (recruitment, assessment and selection; training; one year experience in a school; and employment as a senior leader [as deputy or assistant head]) was assessed. Finding good fulltime placements in schools for participants in the Future Leaders Program presented a challenge as not all heads delegate responsibilities or build capacity within the school. However, Earley et al. confirmed evaluation of Future Leaders to date has generally been positive. They acknowledged new models of headship such as co-leadership, executive and federated heads are also being explored by the NCSL. Earley et al. raised the question “Will the future see a greater acceptance of different models of headship as well as different routes to the top job and different kinds of people filling them” (p. 305)? The NCSL has supported initiatives to address an expected shortfall of qualified leaders in schools. To date, it is too early to predict which of the initiatives will be most useful in providing the best pool of candidates for leadership positions.

Succession planning has traditionally been fobbed off on the human relations department. However, in the complexity of today’s schools it is important that the school division closely align their succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship with the essential components of sustainable leadership for school



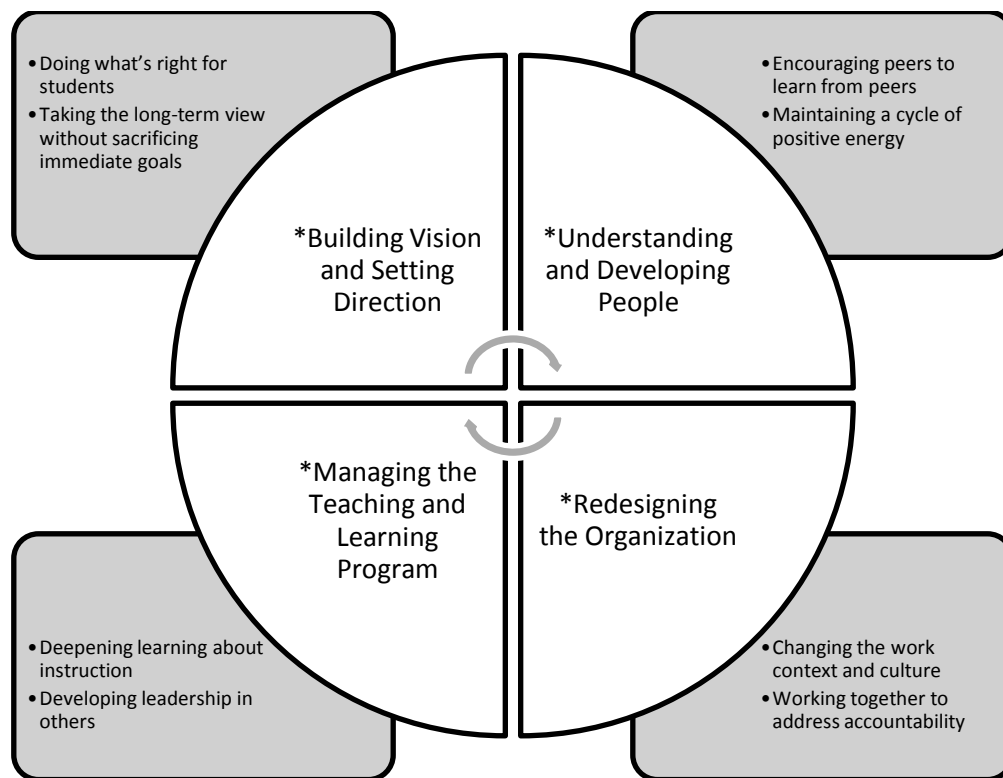
improvement. There is a strong need to recruit, develop, and retain those with the ability to provide sustainable leadership within the elementary school principalship.

### **Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Leadership**

Day and Leithwood (2007), who investigated successful leadership practices in eight countries, affirmed that “successful school principalship requires a combination of cognitive and emotional understandings allied to clear sets of standards and values, the differential application of a cluster of key strategies, and the abiding presence of a passion for people and education” (p. 172). This statement underpins the conceptual framework for the essential components of sustainable leadership as set out in Figure 2.1. Leithwood et al. (2006a), in their extensive literature review, *Successful School Leadership: What it is and How it Influences Pupil Learning*, found robust research supported the claim that “almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices” (p. 3). Drawing from their work, the researcher has used the four core practices of leadership: building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the teaching and learning program as the basis of the conceptual framework for this study.

These categories of practice are a significant part of the repertoire of successful school leaders, whether working in a primary (elementary) or secondary school, a school or a school district/LA, a school in England, the United States, Canada or Hong Kong. (Leithwood et al., 2006b, p. 19)

**Figure 2.1**  
**Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Leadership**



**Foundation: values, commitment, and communication**

\* Core Practices of Successful Leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006a)

- Adapted Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership (Fullan, 2005a)

The essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement are placed around the outside of the circle with labels adapted from those used by Fullan (2005a). The researcher has placed them for best fit, but recognizes there is often overlap making a variety of placements possible.

## **Summary**

Chapter two examines current research in the area of sustainable leadership and succession planning. Together, this research outlined best practices principals could utilize to enable the conditions to support school improvement while simultaneously developing leaders for the future. “Schools and systems that integrate leadership development with professional learning communities will be more likely to thrive when they encounter future leadership challenges” (Hall, 2008, p. 36). The conceptual framework for this study has been developed on the basis of the literature reviewed. This study examined principals’ perceptions regarding essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship. The researcher compared and contrasted theory from the research literature with principal perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. Principals were asked about their perceptions of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship within their school division. Based on their perceptions, implications for succession planning have become apparent.

In chapter three, the researcher describes the methodology used in this study. In phase one the researcher used a survey to examine principals’ perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-

planning practices in their school division. Interpretive panels examined the researcher's analysis of the survey and provided further insights. In phase two, interviews were used to delve deeper into principals' perceptions in order to develop a deeper understanding of essential components of sustainable leadership and implications for succession planning.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

The primary focus of this study was to investigate principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement. Of interest to the researcher were common essential components valued by many principals, as well as the diverse components identified by a smaller number of principals. Using the data collected, the researcher developed a profile of the essential components of sustainable leadership based on the perceptions of principals in four school divisions. Unique essential components may have emerged within any of the four school divisions during the study.

As the secondary focus of this study, the researcher examined principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship. Present succession-planning practices may have supported or undermined sustainable leadership within the school division.

In this chapter, the researcher identifies the overall research design, outlines the specifics regarding how this study was conducted, and stipulates how ethical and credibility standards were met. In order to have successfully addressed the research questions, appropriate methods were selected in order to best collect data that will add to our current knowledge of principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. Based on these perceptions, there may be implications for succession planning.

### **Pragmatism as a Philosophical Paradigm**

Pragmatism, the worldview underpinning this study, is “a philosophical doctrine that denies the possibility of obtaining absolute truth” (Dunn, 2005, p. 187). Dunn described Dewey’s view of knowledge as “an adaptive response to environmental conditions” (p. 188). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) declared “today, the primary philosophy of mixed methods is that of pragmatism” (p. 113).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) indicated for pragmatists “the focus is on the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the question asked rather than the methods, and multiple methods of data collection inform the problem under study” (p. 23). They found pragmatists focus on research that is real-world practice oriented and is intended to be purposeful and practical. Creswell and Plano Clark clearly outlined the basic fundamental assumptions of the pragmatists who support mixed methods research. For pragmatists, ontology, what is the nature of reality, includes both singular and multiple realities. For pragmatists, epistemology, what is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched, is very practical and pragmatic researchers will use what they believe works to address the particular research question—be it subjective or objective. For pragmatists, methodology, the process of gaining knowledge and understanding, involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and mixing them.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) asserted pragmatists combine methods within a single study and see this as a way to use the strengths of each approach, as well as a way to minimize the weaknesses. “Pragmatists ascribe to the philosophy that the research question should drive the method(s) used” (p. 377). Onwuegbuzie and Leech identified

that pragmatic researchers are more able to use qualitative research to inform the quantitative portion of a research study and *vice-versa*. In addition they indicated these researchers can combine the empirical findings with their detailed descriptions, represent the researcher's and the participant's voice, and can represent both the macro and micro level in their research findings. Onwuegbuzie and Leech explained how "pragmatic researchers are more likely to be cognizant of all available research techniques and to select methods with respect to their value for addressing the underlying research questions" (p. 385). In terms of axiology, Morgan (2007) recognized that for pragmatists "our values and our politics are always a part of who we are and how we act" (p. 70).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) and Biesta and Barbules (2003) explained the importance pragmatists place on the outcomes of research and the concern with its application as solutions to address problems. Biesta and Barbules indicated that, to pragmatists, reality is experienced; it is revealed by doing. It is only through action that one can come to know. Biesta and Barbules emphasized that to achieve a common good individuals adjust their individual approaches, perspectives and patterns of actions in order to make a coordinated response possible. Through these actions Biesta and Barbules found that researchers can create *practical intersubjectivity*. While the hard facts of science are one way of knowing, a person must also consider the soft facts such as values, morals, feelings, and emotions. It is in this way that one can reconcile the natural science and the world of everyday life. Rationality involves both intelligent human action and human cooperation. Biesta and Barbules supported Dewey's perspective that knowledge is "something we use in order to live, work, and act in the

world” (p. 69). When we share the experience of others, our *collective problem solving* becomes more intelligent.

Morgan (2007) argued that pragmatists who use both qualitative and quantitative research methods could contribute to social science research. Morgan suggested pragmatic researchers need to reject the dualism between inductive and deductive reasoning and suggested they utilize “a version of *abductive* reasoning that moves back and forth between induction and deduction—first converting observations into theories and then assessing those theories through action” (p. 71). Morgan goes on to say “one of the most common uses of abduction in pragmatic reasoning is to further a process of inquiry that evaluates the results of prior inductions through their ability to predict the workability of future lines of behavior” (p. 71). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) described how the researcher makes decisions about the use of quantitative or qualitative methods based on the “current statement of the research questions and the ongoing *inductive-deductive research cycle*” (p. 87). They claimed pragmatist researchers “can choose to use both inductive and deductive logic to address their research questions” (p. 89) or a third type of logic called *abduction*: “when a researcher observes a surprising event and then tries to determine what might have caused it” (p. 89). Teddlie and Tashakkori defined abduction as “working back from an observed consequence (or effect) to a probable antecedent (or cause). Abduction entails creatively generating insights and making *inferences* to the best possible explanation” (p. 329). Teddlie and Tashakkori cite Yu (1994) as stating, “For Peirce [, who is widely recognized for his analysis of modes of reasoning,] a reasoner should apply abduction, deduction and induction altogether in order to achieve a comprehensive inquiry” (p. 89).



Morgan (2007) also supported a second rejection of dualism, where pragmatic researchers value *intersubjectivity*—acknowledging the researcher, in their relationship to the research process, works back and forth between the objective and the subjective ways of knowing. There is an “emphasis on processes of communication and shared meaning that are central to any pragmatic approach” (p. 72). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) expressed a similar point of view when they stated pragmatists “believe that epistemological issues exist on a continuum.... At some points in the research process, the researcher and the participants may require a highly interactive relationship to answer complex questions. At other points, the researcher may not need interaction with the participants” (p. 90). Morgan’s (2007) third point was that pragmatists reject the dichotomy between knowledge that is specific and context-dependent or universal and generalized and acknowledges the value of *transferability* when making inferences from data. For the pragmatist, working back and forth while conducting extensive investigations leads to making “the most appropriate use of that knowledge in other circumstances” (p. 72).

The researcher views the essential components of sustainable leadership as one way to address the issues of school improvement. The pragmatic emphasis on desirable ends lends itself to the issue of creating more equitable achievement for students in schools. While there is some well established knowledge about essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement, it is important to seek new knowledge as well. What are the perceptions of elementary school principals as they face the present day realities of providing sustainable leadership? Through their experiences principals can indicate what they find is of practical use in their work. The researcher believes this

may result in a valuable contribution to our understanding of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. The secondary focus of this study focused on principals' perceptions of succession planning within their school division also lends itself to this philosophical approach. If the essential components of sustainable leadership are important, then there needs to be a close alignment of the succession-planning practices and the development, selection, and retention of candidates for the elementary school principalship.

This study responded to a problem of the public expecting schools to provide more equitable educational outcomes for all students. The results of this study will help researchers to apply knowledge of theory and practice to this pressing educational problem. The researcher supports communication between researchers who use a variety of research methodologies—believing that on-going dialogue may serve as a springboard to new avenues of research. To this researcher, being pragmatic, creating shared understanding and taking action to solve problems is a worthy goal.

### **A Mixed Methods Research Design**

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identified for some research questions “the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems” (pp. 8–9). *What are principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship?* was such a research question. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) defined mixed methods research questions as “questions that embed both a quantitative research question and a qualitative research question within the same question” (p. 483). Due to

the complex nature of providing sustainable leadership for school improvement, looking at the essential components includes looking at both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) indicated, while the quantitative evidence for some research problems may indicate areas of convergence or divergence; it is the qualitative data that will provide an explanation of these results. These researchers stated “mixed methods research provides more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem” (p. 9). Spillane and Diamond (2006) stressed, “Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but a rich understanding of how, why, and when they do it, is essential if research is to contribute to improving the day-to-day practice of leading and managing schools” (p. 5). Developing a more complete picture of the phenomenon of sustainable leadership, including both numbers and words, may help researchers to solve the elusive problem of providing for success for all students.

There is a pressing need to address accountability issues and build on pockets of success in a way that will lead to improved achievement for all students. Fink (2010) asserted, “If sustained improvement over extended periods of time in deep learning for all children is the goal, then there are very few documented cases” (p. 4). However, sustainable leadership is an area of research already rich in evidence of what Morgan (2007) called “an emphasis on *shared meanings and joint action*” (p. 67). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stressed that “research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers” (pp. 17–18). The researcher believes, given the present-day contingencies of sustainable leadership for school improvement, a mixed methods research design “will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 129). By using

a mixed methods research approach, this study will consider what Howe (1992) referred to as “the intricacies and limitations of actual practice” (p. 245).

A mixed methods research approach, recognized as the third paradigm (Denscombe, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Morgan, 2007) will be used in this study. As defined by Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) a study using a mixed methods research approach will “report both qualitative and quantitative research and include both approaches in the data collection, analysis, integration, and the inferences drawn from the results” (p. 108). Within mixed methods research, particularly research that is strongly associated with pragmatism, Morgan (2007) claimed an emphasis on abduction, intersubjectivity, and transferability is well founded. He illustrated how the three key dualisms of qualitative and quantitative research (including induction or deduction as processes to gain knowledge, subjectivity or objectivity in the research process, and context-specific or universal-generalizable findings) are rejected in favor of strong communication between researchers and efforts made towards creating knowledge through *joint actions* or *projects*. Morgan described how there is

a solidly pragmatic focus on what people can do with the knowledge they produce and not on abstract arguments about the possibility or impossibility of generalizability. Instead, we always need to ask how much of our existing knowledge might be usable in a new set of circumstances, as well as what our warrant is for making any such claims. (p. 72)

Greene (2006) indicated that, in the future, mixed methods researchers need to value how “mixed methods inquiry honors complexity alongside diversity and difference, and

thereby resists simplification of inherently contextual and complex human phenomena” (p. 97).

Sustainable leadership for school improvement is an area in which a fully established explicit *a priori* theory does not exist (Davies, 2007a; Fullan, 2009b; Hargreaves, 2009; Leithwood et al. 2008). Some of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement are well supported by robust research, whereas other essential components indicated by recent studies warrant further investigation. A mixed methods approach will provide quantitative data to support or refute previous claims, and will also provide qualitative data to further extend our current understanding of sustainable leadership. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) maintained, with proper pre-planning, the strengths of each research approach can be maximized and the corresponding weaknesses minimized.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) also asserted that mixed methods research “provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research” (p. 9). They acknowledged that many researchers believe that quantitative research is weak in taking into account an understanding of the context of the research or the voices of the participants. Third, quantitative researchers stay in the background of their research and rarely do the readers learn about the researchers’ personal biases or how they derive their interpretations. Each of these weaknesses of qualitative research is viewed as an area of strength in quantitative research. Creswell and Plano Clark recognized that qualitative research is often viewed as weak due to the personal interpretations of the researchers that involve personal biases and the limited number of participants that makes generalizing findings difficult. Each of these weaknesses of

qualitative research is viewed as an area of strength in quantitative research. Creswell and Plano Clark supported mixed methods research when they stated, “the combination of both approaches can offset the weaknesses of either approach used by itself” (p. 9). As outlined by Bryman (2004), a mixed methods research approach will permit a more generalized understanding of key concepts of sustainable leadership for school improvement while simultaneously “presenting readers with the realities of leadership, with the impact of context, and with an understanding of leadership in relation to change” (p. 763).

A pragmatic mixed methods research approach will allow the researcher to explore the complexity of the essential components of sustainable leadership and examine this phenomenon from both an insider (drawing on perspectives of participants) and an outsider perspective (drawing on existing theory). The researcher will use a mixed methods research design to investigate principals’ perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement at the elementary school level in four school divisions. There may be evidence of essential components of sustainable leadership previously accepted in other contexts that are firmly rejected by participants in this study. This study of principals’ perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement may also lead to the emergence of new essential components of sustainable leadership.

In addition, the use of mixed methods allowed the researcher to examine succession-planning practices from the perspective of elementary school principals within the selected school divisions. Based on principals’ perceptions there may be implications for succession planning. Principals’ perceptions of the essential components

of sustainable leadership may or may not be aligned with the current succession-planning practices for teacher development, recruitment for formal leadership positions, on-going development for principals, and retention of school principals. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected by the researcher were used to explore emerging areas of convergence or divergence.

### **Data Collection**

This study was an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design that included two separate phases. Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) described this type of design as primarily a *development design* because the study involves “the sequential timing of the implementation of the different methods. One method is implemented first, and the results are used to help select the sample” for the second method. Greene, Caracelli, and Graham would also call this a *complementarity* design that will “measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 258). The quantitative data gave a macro environmental scan of the principals’ perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement at a school division level while the qualitative data provided a micro scan of the individual principal’s perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. .

In phase one, a survey was conducted inviting all principals in four public school divisions (two urban and two rural) to participate. Phase two included interviewing a purposive sample of principals from the same four school divisions. At the developmental stage, this research gave equal priority to quantitative and qualitative

methods (QUAN → QUAL)<sup>1</sup> to answer the research questions posed in this study. The researcher built on a base of established theory while recognizing it may not represent the full picture of principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. After the analysis was completed the final weighting of the study remained one of equal weighting of methods.

The emphasis on quantitative or qualitative was assessed in an ongoing manner during the study. Tashakkori (2009) indicated "it is only during the process of integration and/or making conclusions that one might be (if at all) able to 'assign' a greater weight to the qualitative or quantitative components" (p. 289). Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick (2006) pointed out the decision regarding weighting may be made at the design stage or later during data collection or analysis. In this study, the researcher believed it was important to keep an open mind as principals' perceptions in the Saskatchewan context may or may not reveal findings similar to studies in other contexts. In phase one, principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement were highly convergent around some of the essential components designated by previous research giving the quantitative findings more weight. For other essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement the data in phase one revealed more divergent thinking and the qualitative data was weighted more highly as the researcher probed deeper for an explanation for this divergence. It was the data collected that determined whether the quantitative or qualitative phase of the research should be given a similar or different emphasis.

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<sup>1</sup> This notation indicates the quantitative methods were used before the qualitative methods, and both have equal emphasis in this study



### **Phase one.**

Phase one involved two distinct stages. Stage one involved the development of a survey instrument to illicit principals' perceptions regarding the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. Stage two involved the implementation of the survey in four selected school divisions in Saskatchewan.

#### ***Development stage.***

Although there have been many studies conducted in the area of sustainable leadership for school improvement, the researcher did not find an appropriate published survey that could be utilized in this study. An active search of possible sources such as *Tests in Print VI*, *Tests: A Comprehensive Reference for Assessments in Psychology, Education and Business*, and *Mental Measurements Yearbook (16<sup>th</sup>)* yielded no published surveys on sustainable leadership. After considerable searching the researcher contacted Dr. Kenneth Leithwood to ask for assistance in locating an existing survey. His response was he was unable to assist with locating a published survey.

The researcher then pursued developing a suitable instrument for this study. This development began with compiling a list of possible stems for questions based on the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement as outlined in the related research literature. In addition, possible stems for questions for succession-planning practices were also compiled. On the basis of this list, a first draft of an initial survey was put together by the researcher. Gradually the number of questions to represent each of the essential components of sustainable leadership and succession-planning practices was reduced to a core set of questions. The survey was designed to

permit the researcher to see if espoused theory and theory of use appeared to be aligned. Within this development process the researcher kept the primary focus on essential components of sustainable leadership and the secondary focus on succession-planning practices.

Popham (2000) and Hittleman and Simon (2002) indicated consultation with other experts can be used to help ensure that questions on surveys are representative of the major aspects of each domain resulting in content validity. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) emphasized the importance of piloting the survey with “a small sample similar to the potential respondents” (p. 424). In addition, Fraenkel and Wallen indicated piloting a survey can help to address the content validation related to the format of the instrument including “clarity of printing, size of type, adequacy of work space (if needed), appropriateness of language, clarity and directions” (p. 153).

The researcher consulted Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) who provided guidelines to be used when designing the questionnaire format. Steps were also taken to increase the reliability and validity of the survey instrument by consulting with the researcher’s advisor and committee members and several retired administrators about the survey questions. Based on these consultations, the survey instrument was redrafted and then piloted with 10–15 former elementary school principals not involved in this study. Those involved in the pilot were provided with a written copy of the survey and asked to comment on questions and the format of the survey. The researcher was open to suggestions regarding clarity and appropriateness of directions and of each question, the options for answering the questions, and the format of the survey. Based on the results of the pilot, the survey was further refined and the final draft of the survey established.

By the end of the development stage, a primarily quantitative survey instrument (see Appendix E), based on the research literature previously reviewed in chapter two, was developed by the researcher in two key areas: sustainable leadership and succession planning. Questions on the survey were developed for each of the eight essential components for sustainable leadership for school improvement that have received support in previous research. Questions were also developed based on the research literature on succession planning regarding the key succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship currently used by school divisions.

This process, as outlined above, helped to provide for a solid initial development of the survey instrument. The implementation stage and the second phase of this study confirmed certain aspects of the instrument but also indicated possible further refinements. However, this survey continues to represent a first step in the development of an instrument that may be of beneficial use to Saskatchewan school divisions.

#### ***Implementation stage.***

The survey was conducted in two urban public school divisions and two randomly selected rural public school divisions from the central region of Saskatchewan school divisions. In order to choose the rural school divisions, all central Saskatchewan school division names were recorded on slips of paper and then a draw was made. A list of the school divisions was created in the order in which their names were drawn. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were sent to the first two school divisions on this list. If any selected school division denied permission, a request was made of the next school division on the list. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to all elementary school principals in the four school divisions participating in this study.

Responses to this survey (primarily a participant Likert rating scale) indicated which essential components of sustainable leadership principals saw as most important for school improvement. The results of the survey also indicated how succession-planning practices are aligned or misaligned with the essential components of sustainable leadership.

Within the survey instrument several open-ended questions provided an opportunity for principals to comment on additional essential components of sustainable leadership or practices of succession planning for the elementary principalship that they believed are important. This permitted the emergence of new ideas not found to be significant in previous research.

In addition, the survey requested demographic information from each participant that helped to clarify if patterns existed in principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. This portion of the data collected examined what differences in principals' perceptions existed based on school context, a principal's years of administrative experience, principal's years of tenure in this school or principal's gender. The researcher, when drawing inferences regarding succession planning, also used the demographic information provided.

At the end of the survey participants were asked if they are willing to have further involvement in the study. First participants were asked if they are willing to serve on an interpretive panel to assist the researcher by providing further insights from the analysis of the survey. Using the demographic information provided, the researcher selected 3–4 participants from each of the four school divisions. Second the participants were asked if

they were willing to participate in an interview during phase two of the study. Criteria used to select a purposive sample are set out in the following section.

### **Phase two.**

Based on an analysis of the data from phase one, an initial purposive sample of three principals from each school division was selected for interview. Stake (2006) stated, “an interview should be less about the interviewee than about the case” (p. 31). Teddlie and Yu (2007) indicated there are times in the qualitative strand when the criteria for the purposive sample are focused on maximizing the information to be offered; in this instance about the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement by principals at the elementary school level. Individual interviews permitted the researcher to delve deeper into participants’ perspectives of essential components of sustainable leadership and to ask about succession-planning practices in their school divisions. The researcher selected participants who have had the opportunity to reflect on their own practice of providing leadership for school improvement. The criteria for selection of candidates for interviews included:

1. Must currently be an appointed principal in the selected school division.
2. Must participate in the survey and indicate a willingness to be interviewed.
3. Must have at least one year of experience as a principal in this school division.
4. Must acknowledge on the survey that the principal has a significant role within the area of sustainable leadership.
5. Must, where possible, support a purposive sample that includes both male and female administrators, administrators new to their school this year and

those continuing in their school for another year, administrators with a variety of years of experience and administrators based in a variety of contexts.

6. Must be accepted for inclusion by my committee for this research, made up of professors from the College of Education, who will be consulted during the proposal stage of this research.

At the end of the interview, principals were asked to highlight up to three artifacts that best illustrated their work using the essential components of sustainable leadership. Principals were aware of this part of the interview well ahead of the interview day. This encouraged reflection on the part of participants about the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement prior to the interview. The number of artifacts was kept small to encourage principals to make an evaluation of their own work that would help them to be highly selective of what represents their best efforts to provide sustainable leadership. This reflection enhanced the richness of the data provided by the participants. Possible artifacts included: a school planning document, a professional development plan for the school, an evaluation of their work by a senior administrator, an organizational chart of the school committees, a committee photograph, a school newsletter, a copy of an invitation for feedback from students or parents, a data collection record that indicated improved student achievement such as assessment for learning results, a career planning document used with teachers or a parent council document. Principals were asked to briefly highlight the significance of each artifact they provided in terms of using the essential components of sustainable leadership. It was the principal's statements about each artifact that was of interest to the researcher.

Creswell (2007) outlined ways to maximize the quality of the data collected during interviews. Collection of data during interviews included using an interview protocol to enable the researcher to record significant points during the interview. However, interviews were recorded so they could be transcribed at a later date and permit a more detailed account of each interview to be maintained for later examination. These two steps facilitated a better rapport between the researcher and the interviewer during the interview. They also freed the researcher to notice the nuances of facial expression, gestures, or tone of voice that may have led the researcher to probe for additional information from the interviewee.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) argued appropriate sample size “involves saturation of information” (p. 183). They defined *saturation* as “a term used to describe the point when you have heard the range of ideas and aren’t getting new information” (p. 183). Teddlie and Tashakkori indicated four factors need to be considered when determining sample size: the dominance of quantitative or qualitative as the study takes shape, the relative merits of seeking breadth or depth of information, the value placed on external validity and transferability and what is practical. After conducting three interviews in each school division (only two interviews in one school division, an exception explained in chapter five), the researcher made an assessment of the data collected to this point in the research. If a saturation point had been reached, and no new information was emerging, no further interviews were held in that school division. If there were still unanswered questions in a particular school division then additional interviews were conducted in that school division. Teddlie and Tashakkori indicated minimum sample size for “case studies of institutions often vary from approximately 4 to

12 studies; case studies of individuals may be larger, often ranging from approximately 6 to 24 cases” (p. 184).

### **Reliability, Validity/Trustworthiness, Generalizability/Transferability**

Selecting four public school divisions for phase one, of the study, focused on principals’ perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement provided a variety of contexts. There were also a variety of opportunities for individual principals in terms of system supports and expectations. Participants were involved with different system succession plans and had knowledge of how it was working within their school division.

In order to provide for a variety of settings, the two urban school divisions and a random selection of two rural school divisions in central Saskatchewan were included in this study. Conducting the study in four school divisions was planned to ensure a large enough sample size, to detect significant differences and make the quantitative results generalizable. However, “the more diverse, or variable, the individuals within each group, the larger the sample needs to be to detect a real difference between the groups” (Utts, 2005, p. 7). Utts pointed out in statistics “a sample of 30 is usually considered ‘large’ but if there are extreme outliers, it is better to have a larger sample” (p. 362). By conducting the survey in two urban school divisions and two rural school divisions the sample from each type of school division was more likely to exceed thirty. The collective sample from the four school divisions was expected to far exceed thirty participants. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) indicated “a recommended minimum number of subjects is 100 for a descriptive study” (p. 108). Several follow-up e-mails were sent



to those who initially failed to respond to the electronic survey in order to improve the rate of return and thus ensured the sample of returned surveys was more representative.

Dellinger and Leech (2007); Leech, Dellinger, Brannagan, and Tanaka (2010); Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, (2006); and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) emphasized the importance that steps be taken to improve the reliability and validity of the research instrument. In this study, the instrument developed for the survey, composed of mainly closed questions, was piloted with administrators or recently retired administrators not involved in the study. Participants in the pilot and committee members were asked to examine the survey for any evidence of bias on the part of the researcher. Open-ended questions within the survey permitted participants in the study to point out additional components they believed were not covered by the survey that contribute to an understanding of the essential components of sustainable leadership. Participants also had the opportunity to make additional comments about present practices of succession planning for the elementary school principalship in their school division. In addition during the analysis, a Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to check on internal consistency of the instrument. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) supported the use of this coefficient in “calculating the reliability of items that are not scored right versus wrong” (p. 161). Haertel (2006) noted the Cronbach alpha coefficient that is based on a single administration of a testing instrument may overestimate reliability as it does not take into consideration fluctuations over time.

On the basis of the survey results, participants who had knowledge of sustainable leadership were purposively selected for the interviews. Surveys indicated principals’ previous experience with the role of providing sustainable leadership, and gave an initial

measure of their reflections regarding sustainable leadership and current succession-planning practices. My committee for this research, made up of professors from the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, was consulted regarding the selection of participants for the interview at the proposal stage of the research. Efforts were made to ensure the purposive sample was representative of the Saskatchewan population of administrators in rural and urban school divisions in terms of gender, years of administrative experience, and contextual factors such as urban/rural and school level (K-8, K-12, or other configurations of both elementary and secondary students). Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) emphasized “generalization is made more plausible if data are presented to show that the sample is representative of the intended population on at least some of the relevant variables” (p. 104). Based on consultation with the researcher’s advisor, the researcher assessed whether the interview protocol solicited data to explain areas of convergence and divergence as revealed by the data collected in phase one. Warranted changes were made to the interview protocol. In addition the researcher piloted the interview process with a recently retired administrator in order to determine if other changes were necessary. These steps helped to increase the reliability of the interview protocol for phase two. This added to the credibility of including data collected during the interviews.

Triangulation of different data sources and methods was used to validate the findings of this study. The survey results primarily imparted quantitative data, interviews provided qualitative data, and principal’s statements about artifacts shared during interviews provided qualitative and/or quantitative data. The researcher looked for areas of convergence and divergence. Using different sources of data to provide evidence of

validity, as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), was utilized in this study. Three different data sources (surveys, interviews, and administrative comments about selected artifacts) from four different school divisions increased the validity/trustworthiness of findings of this study. An audit trail was carefully documented as the research was conducted to increase *descriptive validity* that “refers to the factual accuracy of an account as reported by the researcher” (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 300).

Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Jiao (2007); Dellinger and Leech (2007); Leech et al. (2010); Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, (2006); and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) stressed the importance of credibility as an important aspect of report writing. During interviews, principal’s comments about artifacts they provided as examples that illustrated their own sustainable leadership highlighted principal perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership or present succession-planning practices. Recorded interviews were stored after transcription and member checks of the interview transcript supported credibility of how the researcher represented the findings from this study.

Results from phase one were generalizable only with caution due to the developmental nature of the survey utilized by the researcher in this study and the survey sample of 50 participants. The case studies developed in phase two may be transferable by the reader if sufficient data is provided for the reader to be able to judge the similarities and differences between the context in the case study and the context considered by the reader. Purposive sampling, as recommended by Creswell (2007) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), was used to provide enough variety between selected participants and enough descriptive detail to help readers to make judgments about transferability of findings to similar contexts.

The integration of findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study was used to provide a holistic understanding of principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices. This was accomplished by utilizing joint display of data collected, case reports for each school division, and a composite case report for all four school divisions in the study. As described by Bryman (2006) this resulted in broad relationships among variables, in this case essential components of sustainable leadership, with contextual understanding, in four school divisions. Also included were principal's perceptions of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. The integration methods used provided for "the use of qualitative data to illustrate quantitative findings" (p. 106).

The Validation Framework, developed by Dellinger and Leech (2007), focused on construct validity, as "an open, continuous system in which construct meaning is the product of convergence and divergent evidence, results, consequences, and arguments from all research related to that construct, whether qualitative or quantitative" (p. 321). Dellinger and Leech argued the validity of research is determined by discourse and language within a research community. The Validity Framework can provide a guide for researchers in how to build and support their findings. Unique to their framework is the *foundational element*, common to all three research paradigms, that requires the researcher to reveal all knowledge of the construct prior to conducting the study and to indicate how it has influenced methodological choices. Dellinger and Leech recognized a strong literature review can improve the quality and the usefulness of the research study. The researcher has developed the survey instrument based on the findings of researchers

included in the literature review for this study and comprised of all the essential components incorporated in the conceptual framework for this study. Hittleman and Simon (2002) emphasized “when an instrument’s creator demonstrates the instrument as representing a supportable theory, it is said to have *construct validity*” (p. 111).

Coherence is an important quality of strong research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Kane, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this study, the philosophical approach of pragmatism supported the purpose of the study and the research questions that were closely tied to a real world problem. Through the literature review, the researcher gave the reader an informed perspective of the existing literature in the areas of sustainable leadership and succession planning. Davies (2007a), Fullan (2009b), Hargreaves (2009), Leithwood et al. (2008) and others supported a need for ongoing studies into the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. As there was only a partially developed *a priori* theory of sustainable leadership, mixed methods research methodology was an appropriate choice that would confirm or refute some components while allowing new components to emerge. The research included a detailed description of the research design and explained how the data collection and data analysis was conducted. As suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), when discussing rigorous mixed methods research, this study made use of procedures appropriate to the type of design and included a mixed methods data analysis. As emphasized by Dellinger and Leech (2007), inferences of this study were “consistent given what is known from prior understandings, past research, and theory ... [and] appropriate given the study design, measurement, and analysis” (p. 324).

Reflexivity was tracked throughout the research process. This process began with the positionality of the researcher with respect to the purpose of the study. It also included the statement of the philosophical position taken by the researcher in making decisions regarding the methodology. Throughout the data collection and analysis stages of the research a journal was maintained as decisions were made that affected the research process. This journal was shared with the researcher's advisor and if requested, members of the committee to provide a written record of researcher reasoning behind decisions made. Creswell (2007) indicated peer review supports more informed decision-making throughout the research process.

### **Data Analysis**

This study was designed to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. Hallinger and Heck (1996) emphasized "the importance of beginning with theoretically informed models of leadership and how it influences school performance" (p. 34). In this study, phase one included the development of a survey instrument and the implementation of a survey of principals from four Saskatchewan school divisions (two rural and two urban) to investigate principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. This survey was based on the research literature reviewed in chapter two regarding two key areas: sustainable leadership and succession planning. The survey also asked for demographical information from each principal concerning their school

context, years of experience as an administrator, years of tenure as principal of the current school, and gender.

Statistical analysis of the data collected from the survey in phase one provided a profile of principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement at the elementary school level. It revealed which essential components of sustainable leadership put forward in the research literature were supported by the perceptions of school principals in four school divisions. It also indicated which of the essential components were used most often and in what types of contexts. There may also be a relationship between years of administrative experience, total years of tenure as principal of this school or gender and principal preferred use of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. Descriptive statistics were used to provide more clarity regarding the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement in each school division and the composite of the four school divisions. In addition the survey responses provided a description of principals' perceptions of present succession-planning practices in their school divisions. Statistical analysis indicated which practices were widely used and which were supported less frequently. The distribution of results was not a normal curve so a nonparametric test was used to determine if significant differences existed within the data.

A Kruskal Wallis Test, based on rankings (Field, 2009), established whether significant differences exist among and between school divisions with respect to particular essential components of sustainable leadership or particular succession-planning practices. Due to the small size of the total sample and the use of a nonparametric test the researcher set the level of significance as  $p < .10$ . Cohen (2003)

supported that in exploratory studies it may be desirable to use “a less rigorous standard for rejection”. By increasing the power of the test in this way the researcher hopes to avoid overlooking differences that actually do exist. However, the researcher has also adopted a distinction between significant ( $p < .05$ ) and marginally significant ( $p < .10$ ) described by George and Mallory (2003).

In addition a focus group, made up of experienced principals, acting as an interpretive panel from each of the four school divisions, was asked to review the researcher’s analysis of the results of the survey for their division. Based on the demographic information from the survey, the researcher selected members to serve on school division panels in order to include administrators who represented both genders, a variety of years of administrative experience, those new to their current school and others returning to their current school and serving in a variety of contexts. Noonan (2002) exemplified how collaborative efforts can be used to improve interpretation of the data by asking the members of the interpretive panels to “review the researcher’s understandings of the results of the analysis, or to help explain the results” (p. 90). Discussions with the interpretive panels were used by the researcher to confirm essential components of sustainable leadership perceived as useful in the given context and to identify emerging components as well. These interpretive panels also commented on the interpretation of the data with respect to succession planning within their school divisions. Principals working within the given school division had “unique insights to provide regarding the interpretation” (Noonan, 2002, p. 93) and thus provided “enriched interpretation” (p. 96) of the data. Johnson and Turner (2003) emphasized the goal of interpretive validity is “to



understand the research participants' (rather than the researcher's) views and ways of thinking" (p. 300).

Merriam (1988) defined a case study "as an examination of a specific phenomenon" (p. 9) and indicated "one would study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (p. 10). A case may become more clearly defined within the research process after the analysis, at the end of phase one of the study. In this study at this point in the research process it appeared more appropriate to have the interview results parallel the survey results by moving from a case study of all principals interviewed in a particular school division to a composite of the four school divisions.

Principal's statements about artifacts provided helped to establish how principals used the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. Statements about artifacts that provided evidence of improved student achievement were of particular interest to the researcher conducting this study.

Thus, in this study a case was made up of principals' perceptions, from one school division of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices in their school division. A case study was used in this study to reflect the perceptions of all principals interviewed in one school division regarding essential components of sustainable leadership and current succession-planning practices used within the school division. The researcher developed a case report for each school division and, based on individual principal's accounts, included a description of known confounding variables (both mediating and moderating) operating within the specific school division. This assisted the researcher and the reader in determining if what has been established about essential components of sustainable

leadership in theory was matched by principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement in four school divisions. It also assisted in determining whether findings were replicated across a variety of contexts.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) claimed "rigorous analyses may uncover relationships in the data that are not revealed through other means" (p. 17). By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, areas of convergence and divergence helped to illuminate the findings. Johnson et al. (2007) acknowledged the ideas developed by Sieber (1973) when they stated, "During the data analysis stage, quantitative data can facilitate the assessment of generalizability of the qualitative data and shed new light on qualitative findings. Alternatively, during the data analysis stage, qualitative data can play an important role by interpreting, clarifying, describing, and validating quantitative results" (p. 115). The integration of findings that follows highlighted the use of these interactions.

### **Integration of Findings**

In this mixed methods sequential exploratory design study the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study were connected. The analysis of the quantitative data collected in phase one informed the selection of the participants for phase two. In addition, the data collected in phase one was used to refine the interview protocol for use in phase two. Survey data collected indicated areas of convergence or divergence that warranted further investigation in phase two. The researcher assessed whether the interview protocol as initially developed would need modification in order to provide data that further explained findings from the original survey. By grounding the interview

questions in the quantitative results from phase one, the information collected in phase two explored and elaborated further on principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship.

Initially, findings were presented individually for each phase of this study. However, findings were then combined to provide a holistic understanding of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and the implications for succession planning for the elementary school principalship within four central Saskatchewan school divisions. Bryman (2007) indicated, "bringing quantitative and qualitative findings together has the potential to offer insights that could not otherwise be gleaned" (p. 9). Luck et al. (2006) also pointed out how "methods from the traditional paradigms can legitimately be used to shed light on the case of interest... [and] multiple methods can be mutually informative" (p. 108).

Bazeley (2009) indicated that a recent breakthrough in mixed methods research has been "analytic techniques that support integration" (p. 206). Luck, Jackson, and Usher (2006) asserted it is possible to compile a case study analysis using both qualitative and quantitative data. These researchers demonstrated how case study can be used to bridge from the qualitative to the quantitative paradigm as case study permits a flexible choice of methods and takes into consideration how context may come into play. Stake (2006) supported multiple case study analysis as a good method to reveal contextual knowledge about a phenomenon

Bryman (2007) interviewed 20 social scientists in the United Kingdom who had utilized a mixed methods research approach in their recent work. Bryman found

preplanning could facilitate what he called *genuine integration* where findings from qualitative methods and quantitative methods enrich each other. Bryman argued,

In genuinely integrated studies, the quantitative and the qualitative findings will be mutually informative. They will talk to each other, much like a conversation or debate, and the idea is then to construct a negotiated account of what they mean together. (p. 21)

In this way, Bryman contended in synthesis “there is a sense that the written account should be more than the sum of the parts” (p. 21). Bryman (2007) reviewed 232 social science articles to investigate how qualitative and quantitative research was integrated in practice when the researcher had indicated using a mixed methods research approach. He found many discrepancies between the rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative research and actual practice. He stated the discrepancy may be a result of rationales for using mixed methods research not being thought through adequately at the design stage or a result of mixed methods research providing such an abundance of data that researchers find within the data uses for their findings that they had not expected.

Bryman (2007) and Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) recognized a gap in the research literature and suggested exemplars indicating how to integrate findings appropriately would be useful to the research community. Ivankova et al. (2006) provided an exemplar focused on how to clearly explain the two separate phases of the research and how to integrate findings. They exemplified procedural issues related to the mixed-methods sequential design by illustrating the process within a study of doctoral students’ persistence in a distance-learning program in educational leadership. Ivankova et al. illustrated how a mixed methods sequential design can be used effectively so that

“in combination quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis, taking advantage of the strengths of each” (p. 3). Their paper also emphasized the importance of providing a graphical model of the study in order to clarify the design, the sequence of data collection, the priority of method, and the connecting and mixing points of the data. Ivankova et al.’s paper has helped the researcher to design this study and to develop an appropriate visual model of procedures.

Lee and Greene (2007) conducted complementarity mixed methods research focused on predicting graduate level success by utilizing assessment of English proficiency. Their research can also serve as an exemplar for how to integrate the analysis for this study and particularly their use of the strategy of *joint display*. The researcher for this study used joint display to connect the data from the survey with the data from the interviews.

The researcher decided purposive sampling of special cases of principals involved in providing sustainable leadership for school improvement, best illuminated the findings of this study. Within these individual cases, selected as information rich, there were different perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership that were related to context, total years of experience as a principal, years as principal of this school, or the principal’s gender. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 19, was used to help integrate the data from the closed-ended questions of the survey. Case studies were developed utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data for each school division. Case analysis added to our knowledge of principals’ perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership and current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship.

Joint display was used to link quantitative scores from the surveys, and qualitative data provided by survey participants or interpretive panel members in phase one with the qualitative data collected during interviews in phase two. Both convergent and divergent quotes were included in a matrix. Principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership were ranked in order of perceived importance, with convergent and divergent comments placed beside these rankings. Similarly principals' perceptions of current succession-planning practices were ranked in order of perceived importance, with convergent and divergent comments placed beside these rankings. Joint display of findings helped to develop a better understanding of principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership and present succession-planning practices. There were areas of convergence, inconsistency, or even contradiction.

As this type of research is relatively new within the Saskatchewan context, this study provided an initial exploration and resulted in a starting point for the work of future researchers. Recommendations based on findings provided some guidance for further research in the areas of sustainable leadership and implications for succession planning. In addition, this research served as an initial step in the development of a survey instrument for use in Saskatchewan and more broadly.

### **Visual Model of Sequential Exploratory Design Procedures for This Study**

Ivankova et al. (2006) affirmed “the value of providing a visual model of the procedures has long been expressed in the mixed-methods literature” (p. 15). The researcher has provided a visual model for this study in Figure 3.1.

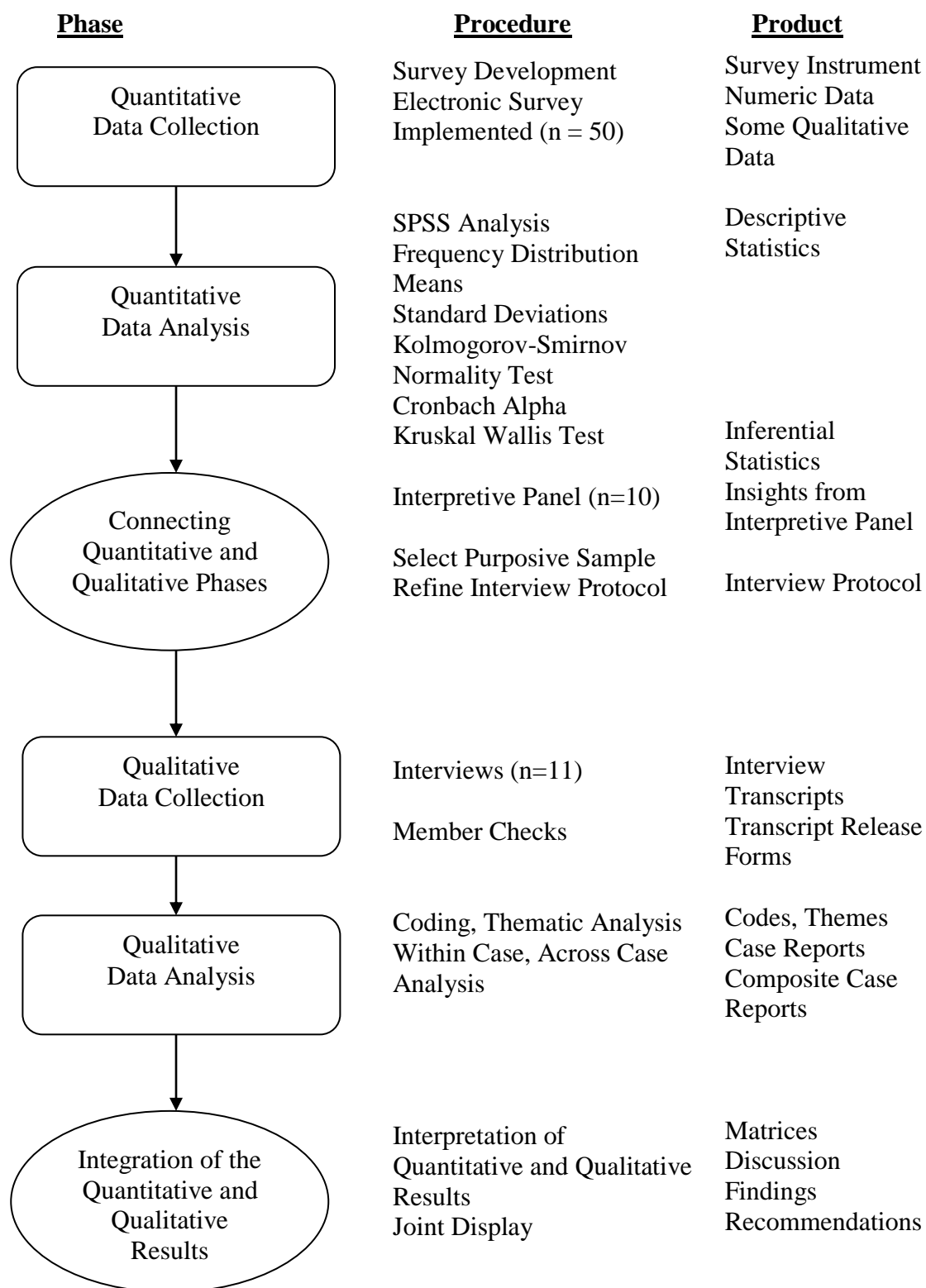
In phase one, the quantitative procedure for data collection included an electronic survey sent to all elementary school principals in four school divisions. This quantitative survey, developed by the researcher, was analyzed using SPSS to determine which of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement were seen as important or less important by principals. Interpretive panels provided further insights to the analysis. A Kruskal Wallis Test revealed the differences between different school principals and among different school divisions.

Based on the analysis of the electronic survey in phase one, two procedures were used to connect the two phases. First, the analysis of phase one helped to select a purposive sample of principals to provide a rich source of information regarding sustainable leadership and succession planning in elementary schools. Second, this analysis was used to refine the interview protocol to best illuminate areas of convergence and divergence.

In phase two, the qualitative procedure for data collection included interviewing a purposive sample of principals from each school division. Member checks with those interviewed regarding interview transcripts were conducted at this stage. The analysis of this qualitative data included a thematic analysis of each interview transcript. For each school division a case study was written utilizing the data from their returned surveys and then from their individual interviews. Significance of artifacts highlighted during interviews was included in these case reports.

The final procedure was to interpret and explain the quantitative and qualitative results. Joint display was used to integrate the findings from the surveys and interviews.

**Figure 3.1.**  
**Visual Model for Mixed Methods Sequential Exploratory Design Procedures**





Based on the findings of the study, implications for sustainable leadership and succession planning for the elementary school principalship were highlighted by the researcher.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher was bound by the principles of academic integrity as outlined and supported by the University of Saskatchewan. Proper acknowledgement of previous research utilized by this study was provided.

After receiving permission from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board to proceed with the study, the researcher formally approached four Saskatchewan school divisions for permission to conduct the study. The researcher asked for a copy of the regulations regarding conducting research in their school division in order to ensure the research was aligned with their requirements. Once permission was obtained, letters of invitation to participate (see Appendix A) were sent to potential participants for phase one. This letter of invitation specified that the project was a research study, provided name and contact information for both the researcher and the researcher's advisor, outlined procedures of the study and expectations for the participants, estimated the required time commitment for participants, indicated how potential candidates could indicate their interest in participating and provided a statement regarding Research Ethics Board approval and contact information.

Participants were informed of their rights as participants. The consent form pointed out, participants have the right to withdraw consent at any point in the research process. Information regarding secure storage of data for a five-year period of time was

provided for participants (see Appendix B). Use of numerical codes on all survey responses and pseudonyms on all records of interviews were used to help ensure anonymity. Participants were made aware of how the research would be used for the researcher's dissertation and possible publication in scholarly journals or books and that direct quotations from questionnaires or interviews would not identify any individual. Following the interviews, member checks were used to ensure that case studies developed accurately portray the principal's perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership and of current practices of succession planning for the elementary school principalship. A transcript release form (see Appendix D) was used prior to inclusion of case studies in the dissertation or future publications. This gave participants the opportunity to prohibit the use of any information they felt would identify them or have a negative impact on their career. Participants were advised of results of the study in a way that did not identify any particular individual or school.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods used to investigate the primary and the secondary research questions: What are principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship? What are principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship?

A mixed methods research approach for this study was selected as most appropriate in light of the research questions. A sequential two-phase design initially

gave equal weight to quantitative and qualitative methods. In phase one a survey of principals in four school divisions was conducted. Analysis after completing phase one included a statistical analysis to indicate which essential components of sustainable leadership and what current practices of succession planning for the elementary school principalship as established in the current research literature were supported by principals' perceptions in four school divisions. Interpretive panels from each school division were consulted to enhance the interpretation of findings from phase one of the study. A purposive sample of principals with experience with the phenomenon of sustainable leadership for school improvement was selected for an interview. A case study for each school division was compiled that reflected the principals' perceptions of the essential components for sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current practices for succession planning for the elementary school principalship. After results of each phase of the study were completed independently, an integrated analysis of the qualitative and quantitative results was carried out. This added to the findings of the two phases in a way that enhanced our current knowledge about sustainable leadership for school improvement at the elementary school level and implications for succession planning for the elementary school principalship.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Data Collection, Analysis, and Results for Phase One**

The primary focus of this study was to investigate principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement. Of interest to the researcher were common essential components valued by many principals, as well as the diverse components identified by a smaller number of principals. Using the data collected, the researcher developed a profile of the essential components of sustainable leadership based on the perceptions of principals in four school divisions.

The secondary focus of this study examined principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school divisions with respect to the elementary school principalship. Present succession-planning practices supported or undermined sustainable leadership for school improvement within the school divisions. Unique practices in these school divisions emerged during the study.

With the primary and secondary purpose in mind, the first step prior to data collection was to submit an Ethics Application seeking permission to conduct the study from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan September 6, 2010. After making a few requested revisions, approval was granted October 22, 2010. In early February, 2011 two further changes were approved.

While waiting for the Certificate of Approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board the researcher piloted the survey instrument with a group of ten retired elementary school principals and five faculty members from the College of Education. Input from the pilot guided the researcher in revising the survey instrument. At this point

the survey instrument was posted on-line using the University of Saskatchewan Web Survey Tool. A second pilot was conducted on-line with five individuals, three who were part of the original pilot, and two who had not seen the instrument previously. This led the researcher in making further refinements to the survey instrument. Several participants in the pilot pointed out the meaning of the term *mutual influence* was unclear. For this reason the phrase *working together to address accountability* was substituted on the survey questionnaire. The shorter term *mutual influence* was retained as a category for use with the SPSS Program. Once the survey instrument was finalized an updated version was forwarded to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

A random selection of rural public school divisions from central Saskatchewan was made as names were drawn from a hat during a meeting between researcher and advisor in mid-August, 2010. After receiving Ethics Approval, the researcher contacted four Directors of Education by mail, two from rural school divisions and two from urban school divisions, requesting permission to conduct the study within their school divisions. In two cases permission was given promptly and packages requesting participation in the study by principals with elementary school students enrolled were mailed November 3. In two other school divisions, there was a lengthy delay before receiving a written response to the initial letter. Their requests for further documentation were promptly met. The remaining two school divisions gave permission for the study to proceed on November 30 and January 7. In the first case packages requesting participation were mailed December 2, 2010 and in the second case January 8, 2011.

The researcher encountered a problem obtaining an adequate number of participants from one of the rural school divisions. Although permission for the study

was given, the director did not respond to requests for a list of the principals and their school addresses. The researcher worked from school websites to find names of the principals and their school addresses. However, response rates to the request for participation was limited. The researcher successfully sent out two reminders regarding the mailed package by e-mail to 65% of principals in the school division, using the e-mail addresses gleaned from school websites. A total of 3 responses out of a potential group of approximately 25 principals fell short of the anticipated response and could not be considered a representative group. On December 6, the researcher notified the director of the school division that the response rate was too low for their school division to be one of the four school divisions within the study, but if the three principals were interested they could complete the on-line survey and act as a confirmatory/non-confirmatory group. At this point the researcher set a minimum participation rate of 20% of principals willing to participate, in order to include any particular school division within the study. This resulted in a modification to the original Ethics Application and this change was submitted to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

On December 6, a third rural school division from the random list of rural school divisions was contacted. This school division received the request five weeks later than other school divisions. Permission was given to proceed with the study on December 14 and packages requesting participation by elementary school principals were mailed January 3.

In one of the rural school divisions and in one of the urban school divisions, the response rates were very low, initially 14 % and 7% respectively. This was in spite of two electronic reminders sent out to all elementary school principals in the school

divisions. To meet the challenge of receiving a satisfactory response to participation requests in these school divisions, all principals who had not responded at that time were contacted by phone. Personal contact brought the response rates up considerably. In the rural school division there were now 42% of elementary school principals willing to participate and in the urban school division 23%. Overall, in the four school divisions 36% (54/148) of potential participants indicated a willingness to respond to the survey.

On February 1, the electronic link was sent to all participants from the four school divisions who had provided a signed consent form. The researcher also sent each participant an e-mail letting them know they should have received the link. This was done as it is a known weakness of the Web Survey Tool that messages mailed to participants do not bounce back notifying the sender if a problem exists. A window was set to permit participants to complete the survey at a time convenient for them during the month of February. However, participants were asked to reply by February 18. At the end of each week the researcher noted who had not responded to the survey to date and sent out a group reminder regarding the remaining time. By February 18, the overall response rate was 83%. The researcher then used personal e-mails or phone calls to encourage completion of the survey resulting in a 93% response rate by the close of the survey. Access to the survey ended February 28 and no further participation was permitted. Data files were saved and the analysis of the results began.

During the analysis it was important to consider the purpose of the study. The primary purpose was to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. The researcher was interested in common essential components valued by many principals and also diverse components identified

by individual principals. The secondary focus was to examine principals' perceptions of current succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship. The researcher was interested in implications for succession planning for the future. The combined findings of this study may also serve as an initial development phase of an instrument to assess sustainable leadership provided by elementary school principals within the Saskatchewan context and implications for succession-planning practices.

Each school division has been assigned a fictitious name to protect the anonymity of the school divisions involved in the study. The names chosen were Rural School Division 1, Rural School Division 2, Urban School Division 1, and Urban School Division 2. Known identifiers have been removed for the same reason.

Data sources are identified in the following way:

1. Participant numbers identify participants' written responses to the survey. In many cases, the researcher was not able to directly link a participant to his or her comments. However, within the survey, participants were required to indicate their school division so these responses could be collated by division. These are numbered in the order in which participants from the four school divisions responded to the survey (See Appendix G).
2. Responses to questions asked in the survey are identified by a capital "Q" followed by the number of the question on the survey. Questions that were reverse scored are distinguished by an asterisk following the question number (e.g., Q10\*).



3. Q2 on the survey instrument asks all principals to describe their school by the grade levels included in their schools. For those principals who selected the answer *other*, an additional question appears which allows them to select all grades Pre-Kindergarten to Grade XII that are accommodated in their school. To facilitate the comparison of responses to individual questions the analysis of results are identified using a common set of question numbers as provided on the survey instrument included in Appendix E.
4. Responses from the interpretive panels were from self-identified and willing participants. To protect their anonymity, responses are identified only by the fictitious name of the school division and when necessary for clarification followed by the letters IP (Interpretive Panel).

The descriptive case studies that follow begin with a brief description of the school division context, and a general description of the data collected in their school division with respect to principal's perceptions regarding sustainable leadership, current succession-planning practices, and their use of the components of sustainable leadership. This is followed by comments and explanations provided by the interpretive panels that help to further interpret the data.

The individual scores by participants for each survey question were utilized to generate a Mean (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD) for all participants from the school division. For level of knowledge of sustainable leadership in agreement with current research and for level of succession-planning practices in agreement with current research a mean greater than 4.5 was interpreted as indicating a high measure of the variable, a mean between 3.5 and 4.5 was interpreted as indicating a moderate measure of

the variable, and a mean below 3.5 was interpreted as indicating a low measure of the variable. For use of the components of sustainable leadership a mean greater than 2.5 was interpreted as indicating a high level of use, a mean of 2.0 to 2.5 was interpreted as a moderate level of use, and a mean of less than 2.0 was interpreted as a low level of use. The tables include the standard deviation for each score to enable readers to see the variability within each score. Following the presentation of the four school divisions, a composite description is provided. The section of results from phase one below ends with a summary of the results.

### **Rural School Division 1: Phase One**

This rural school division is located in the central region of Saskatchewan and there were approximately 30 school principals with elementary students enrolled eligible to participate in this study. The researcher contacted those principals who were in charge of schools that were open to the public. Principals of *alternate schools* or schools with a known religious affiliation were not contacted. For the purposes of this study alternate schools were those that accommodated students with special needs, or often attendance and behavioural needs. Parents could not register their child in these alternate schools unless the school division recommended this as a suitable placement for the student.

In this school division, 33% of principals agreed to participate and 100% of this group responded to the survey. One third of these principals were in charge of schools with students in both elementary and secondary grades while two thirds of the principals had only elementary students in their school.

### **Knowledge of components of sustainable leadership.**

The responses of principals in this school division regarding the essential components of sustainable leadership indicated a high level of understanding that *learning needs to occur at all levels: student, teacher, parent and administrator; the principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement; principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning; principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour they expect from staff; principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement; principals must avoid 'one size fits all' models; teachers need to be valued as professionals and principals must ensure that adequate supports, such as professional development, teaching materials, and planning time, are provided. Principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement* fell in the upper end of the moderate range (See Table 4.1).

One response to individual questions by principals fell in the low range. This was Q11 (see Appendix E) that stated that *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*. Although falling in the moderate range the next lowest scores were for *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results, principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools, principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement and principals should plan how leadership responsibilities/opportunities will be distributed in their schools*. (See Table 4.1) All other scores to individual questions were in the moderate range with a mean between 3.78 and 4.67. To view all scores see Appendix I.

**Table 4.1**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Rural School Division 1**  
**n = 9    5 Point Likert Scale**

Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q40	Learning at all levels	4.89	.333	High
Q48	Principal leadership crucial	4.89	.333	High
Q13	Success for all students	4.67	.500	High
Q24	Model professional behaviour	4.67	.500	High
Q31	Culture seeking improvement	4.67	.500	High
Q32	Diversity of models	4.67	.500	High
Q41	Valued professionals	4.67	.500	High
Q44	Supports	4.67	.500	High
Q25	Involving parents	3.78	.667	Moderate
Q15	Affect on other schools	3.56	.822	Moderate
Q17*	Test results	3.22	1.202	Moderate
Q11*	Focus on own students	1.89	.601	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

Written responses to the survey were informative. Participant #28 commented that “staff need to feel supported and a school climate of trust, shared leadership and opportunity to take some risks needs to be the norm.” Participant #3 pointed out the importance of leaders taking the time to establish relationships and that otherwise “the time spent at work will simply keep things status quo at the very best.”

With respect to contextual issues, both participant #28, who referred to an aging staff, and participant #18, who referred to teachers who resist change, were aware of barriers to establishing sustainable leadership. However, participant #1 described establishing plans to extend the variety of leadership opportunities for the vice-principal,

to give teachers the experience of being an acting administrator, and to encourage teachers to serve as subject expert coaches.

**Current succession-planning practices.**

In Rural School Division 1, succession-planning practices as suggested by principal responses could be described as providing moderate support for sustainable leadership. This was evident in principals' responses regarding *teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction; adequate professional development regarding data management is offered to principals; there are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced; principals understand the importance of communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly assigned principal, to ensure appropriate continuity of direction; and principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure changes are well established* (See Table 4.2).

Responses to individual questions by elementary school principals fell in the low range for a number of questions. The lowest score was in response to *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*. This was followed by *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school; the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work; criteria for the formal leadership position of elementary school principal are clearly established in the school division; the criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division; and due to high stress levels, an increasing number of principals are choosing early retirement*. All other scores to individual questions regarding succession-planning practices fell in the lower

**Table 4.2**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Succession-Planning Practices in Rural School Division 1**  
**n = 9    5 Point Likert Scale**

Succession-Planning Practices		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q53	Leadership opportunities	3.89	.782	Moderate
Q64	Data management	3.89	.601	Moderate
Q56	Leadership development	3.67	1.000	Moderate
Q62	Continuity of direction	3.67	1.118	Moderate
Q67	5 years in a school	3.67	.500	Moderate
Q69*	Early retirement	3.00	1.000	Low
Q52	Criteria for leadership positions communicated	2.89	1.453	Low
Q57	Criteria established	2.89	1.269	Low
Q70	Rewards and recognition	2.56	.726	Low
Q71	Involved in transfer decisions	2.44	1.236	Low
Q61*	View of the principal's role	2.33	.707	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

moderate range and the low range with a mean between 3.67 and 3.00. To view all scores, see Appendix I.

In written responses to the survey, participant #1 suggested “there must be a clear plan in place to nurture interest and develop understanding and support growth in individuals to take leadership positions...there needs to be long term succession planning in our educational organizations.” However, the same participant when asked about current succession-planning practices in your school division stated, “There are none that I am aware of.” In contrast participant #28 responded that the school division has been supportive and helped arrange a Masters class for a group of potential administrators.

### Self-rating of the use of components of sustainable leadership.

Principals rated their own use of the essential components of sustainable leadership, as shown in Table 4.3. Principals indicated using *doing what's right for students, encouraging peers to learn from peers, and maintaining a cycle of positive energy* the most. They indicated moderate use of the other essential components of sustainable leadership with the exception of *changing the work context and culture* which they rated their use as low.

**Table 4.3**  
**Principals' Rating of Their Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership in Rural School Division 1**  
**n = 9 4 Point Likert Scale**

Components of Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q77	Doing what's right for students	2.89	.33	High
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peer	2.78	.44	High
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of positive energy	2.67	.50	High
Q74	Taking the long-term view	2.44	.53	Moderate
Q78	Developing leadership in others	2.44	.53	Moderate
Q73	Deepening learning about instruction	2.33	.71	Moderate
Q76	Working together to address accountability	2.33	.50	Moderate
Q79	Changing the work context and culture	1.89	.78	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = >2.5, Moderate [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = 2.0 to 2.5, Low [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = <2.0

### Insights based on discussion with the interpretive panel.

A panel of three principals, two from schools with grades K-8 and one from a school that included elementary and high school students, met to review the results of the survey and offer their insights. Members of the panel indicated they make a personal

choice as to whether they teach in classrooms. The researcher emphasized those questions where scores fell in the highest or lowest range and solicited information that contributed to these results.

Sustainable leadership was the main focus. Asked about *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*, one participant stated, “I believe that we’ve been encouraged to have very parochial thinking.” This statement appeared to be supported by the panel.

When a low score for *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test scores* was highlighted, one participant acknowledged school divisions in Saskatchewan continue to battle the issue of accountability. In light of what is happening in schools one participant felt “the sustained testing situation is non-realistic.” Discussion ensued regarding the proper use of standardized tests and their application at the provincial and division level.

When the topic of *principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools* was raised, the interpretive panel specified this is evident in their school division in limited areas such as emergency plans and discipline issues but in an informal manner. One participant responded by saying, “I think you need an opportunity, a platform to be able to communicate, so that you get an overall perspective of the vision that the system has.” Another participant acknowledged their school division is moving in that direction.

Members of the interpretive panel had insights specific to their school division regarding *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement*. All members of the panel believed this would be answered



differently depending on the context of your school community. In some communities a parent's "focus was on improving for their particular child" only. One participant indicated that while those in schools would like to get more parents involved that "I think I am seeing that parents are quite comfortable with sending their kids to school and not being involved." One participant raised the issue that, in smaller rural communities, it is a limited number of parents who are involved in all the community activities so they face a high demand on their time to serve as volunteers in a variety of local organizations. The interpretive panel pointed out that parents are very willing to help if the principal communicates what is needed by the school. However, "they're not interested in being there all the time to be part of the governance." There is "a small nucleus of people trying to get more people involved," but to date it is an up-hill battle.

The interpretive panel also commented on results of the survey in the area of succession-planning practices. The lowest score, for *teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*, was seen as reflecting a reality that they had often experienced first-hand when teachers expressed this perception. While "the majority of our teachers are not aspiring to be vice-principals or principals" those that are "may not totally agree with that." Currently this is a common perception.

The interpretive panel supported the approximately 88% of survey participants who disagreed that *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school*. There has been a "real variance of administrative transfers" and "everyone's experience is something different in our system." Some may be notified by e-mail, some receive a phone call while others may have an in-person discussion about their transfer to a different school. Although principals can request a

transfer, one participant conceded, “I’m not even sure there’s a conversation” regarding this request.

Survey results indicated 66% of survey participants were not sure that *criteria for the formal leadership position of elementary school principal are clearly established in the school division*. This was strongly supported by a panel member who admitted, “Lord only knows, that could be completely random in some cases.” The panel agreed it has been hard to understand why some people have been promoted and others denied. The panel acknowledged that the establishment of a cohort interested in future administrative positions, who are involved in leadership development, was a step in the right direction and that having more educational leaves available was also positive. However, for some strong candidates the decision not to pursue graduate studies seems to have been a barrier to consideration for administrative positions. One participant pointed out that it should be recognized we need to continue to make administrative positions more attractive to young people. This participant emphasized that for some applicants a criteria requiring completion of graduate studies presents a barrier due to financial or time restraints.

*Due to high stress levels, an increasing number of principals are choosing early retirement* raised considerable discussion. Panel members believed ‘early retirement’ may have been confusing for some participants. Two of the panel members indicated their belief that when you reach 30 years, unless one has the opportunity to advance to senior administrative positions, principals will retire and use their skills outside this school division. One stated, “I have so many other things I want to do” while another said “I’m ready to do something different and I haven’t had the opportunity.” Panel

members agreed “there’s so much diversity in what we do” but if the work is no longer “challenging and interesting” then it is time to move on and do something different.

Use of the components of sustainable leadership was viewed by the panel as very dependent on context. The present developmental stage of the school has to be considered. Panel members believed this may be why *changing the work context and culture* scored so low. In some situations it may not be as necessary to focus on this aspect of sustainable leadership while in others “that has to happen.” One panel member pointed out how sometimes there may be a deliberate attempt to concentrate on this particular component of sustainable leadership in a particular school year. *Doing what’s right for students*, which scored the highest, was emphasized by saying, “I think that would be the centre for any of us.” One participant expressed surprise that *developing leadership in others* was not ranked higher. This participant ranked this aspect of leadership as being of high importance and asserted,

I don’t think you want to be the control person at the top, you want to be the person that helps, you help to set the vision but you have to be the person that’s there getting everyone else being the best that they can be and if they do their job their best your job is very easy.

Closing comments included the difficulty of obtaining time for instructional leadership in some contexts. In some settings principals work with people who are in crisis. In this situation it is important to look after the primary needs of safety and health first, and “then you can worry about education.” Principals are in the position of “trying to keep people’s lives pieced together.” It was also pointed out “we’re dealing with so many kids with mental health issues” which absorbs the principal’s time, as well. “We do

need to look after our students” even though we are very cognizant of the pressing need to provide instructional leadership.

### **Rural School Division 2: Phase One**

This rural school division is located in the central region of Saskatchewan and there were approximately 40 school principals who were eligible to participate in this study. The researcher contacted those principals who were in charge of schools that were open to the public. Principals of alternate schools or schools with a known religious affiliation were not contacted. In this school division, 42% of principals agreed to participate and 93% of this group responded to the survey. Approximately three-fifths of these principals were in charge of schools with students in both elementary and secondary grades, while two-fifths of the principals had only elementary students in their school.

#### **Knowledge of components of sustainable leadership.**

The responses of principals in this school division regarding the essential components of sustainable leadership indicated their highest level of understanding that *principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour they expect from staff; positive, respectful, working relationships need to be established at all levels and between levels within the educational system; principals need to keep the focus in the school on improving teaching and learning; the principal must sustain a passion for leadership; teachers need to be valued as professionals; principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning; and teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization* (See Table 4.4). An additional

seven responses fell somewhat lower, but still at a high level of understanding of sustainable leadership.

The lowest score in the area of understanding of sustainable leadership was in response to *principals should always focus on the success of the students in their own school*. Also in the low category were scores for *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results; principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools*; and *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement*. The next two lowest scores fell in the lower moderate range: *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates* and *principals should plan how leadership*

**Table 4.4**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership in Rural School Division 2**  
**n = 14    5 Point Likert Scale**

Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q24	Model professional behaviour	4.86	.363	High
Q49	Working relationships	4.86	.363	High
Q10	Primary focus	4.79	.426	High
Q27	Passion for leadership	4.79	.426	High
Q41	Valued professionals	4.79	.579	High
Q13	Success for all students	4.71	.469	High
Q20	Learning organization	4.71	.469	High
Q36	Plans to distribute leadership	3.93	.829	Moderate
Q26	Professional networks	3.93	.730	Moderate
Q25	Involving parents	3.43	.646	Low
Q15	Affect on other schools	3.14	1.027	Low
Q17*	Test results	3.00	.877	Low
Q11*	Focus on own students	1.50	.519	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*responsibilities/opportunities will be distributed in their school.* All other scores to individual questions regarding sustainable leadership fell in the moderate range with a mean between 4.71 and 3.93. To view all scores, see Appendix I.

In written responses to the survey, participant #53, who supported shared leadership, commented, “Schools should be a community of learners, working together to improve student learning. Improvement efforts will only be successful if the entire teaching staff recognize the need and support it. Building time to collaborate and focus on student learning needs to be a priority for the principal.” This was reinforced by participant #11, who pointed out that “teachers must see the principal as passionate about creating opportunities for success for students.” Other participants emphasized the importance of involving all stakeholders (#32), of taking time to celebrate successes (#8), and that there be recognition of the uniqueness and diversity of school communities (#6). “Standardized tests cannot be the sole indicator of school improvement” was stated by participant #6.

Participants highlighted several issues regarding context. Participant #13 commented the complexity of various pressures resulting from living within the school community “requires a strong individual with a clear sense of what is important to student achievement and a vision of equity for all.” Participants raised the issues of a past history of conflict between parents and the school (#32), declining school size resulting in fewer staff members (#16 and #11), lack of administration time to administer special programs (#23) and the practice of some new administrators using small rural schools as a stepping stone in their career (#8).

### **Current succession-planning practices.**

Responses to individual questions on the survey regarding succession-planning practices, as indicated in Appendix I, predominately ranked in the low range with a mean below 3.5. These rankings reflect that 14/20 of the principals' responses to individual questions were in this low range. The highest scores in this division in response to questions about sustainable leadership fell in the moderate range.

The highest principals' scores on the survey falling in the moderate range affirmed that *external candidates are considered for formal leadership positions*. Principals' responses also equally supported that *teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the areas of improving instruction*. The next highest scores within the moderate range were in response to *principals understand the importance of good communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly assigned principal, to ensure appropriate continuity for school improvement; principals in the school division are expected to discuss career plans with each teacher on a regular basis; there are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced; and a principal is often left alone 'to just do the job' without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills* (See Table 4.5).

Principal responses for *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands* scored much lower than other questions about succession-planning practices. Also falling in the low range were principals' responses to *due to high stress levels, an increasing number of principals are choosing early retirement; in our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career; the rewards and recognition*

**Table 4.5**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Succession-Planning Practices in Rural School Division 2**  
**n = 14    5 Point Likert Scale**

Succession-Planning Practices		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q53	Leadership opportunities	4.07	.730	Moderate
Q60	External candidates	4.07	.616	Moderate
Q62	Continuity if direction	3.93	.616	Moderate
Q54	Teacher career plans	3.64	1.008	Moderate
Q56	Leadership development	3.64	.745	Moderate
Q66*	Lack of support	3.50	1.019	Moderate
Q58	Pool of candidates	2.71	.825	Low
Q70	Rewards/recognition	2.64	1.008	Low
Q65	Nurture leadership skills	2.57	.938	Low
Q69*	Early retirement	2.43	.938	Low
Q61*	View of the principal's role	1.57	.649	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*given to principals encourage them to continue their work; and the school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship. All other scores fell between 3.50 and 2.71. Nine other questions were assessed by principals as falling in the upper end of the low range. To view all scores, see Appendix I.*

Written comments on the survey expressed several concerns. Both participant #32 and participant #23 indicated that many principals in the school division are close to retirement age and there will be an increased number of positions to fill in the near future. Participant #6 asserted, "in-school administration positions are becoming more difficult to fill" and participant #23 indicated these positions "are not always well advertised." With respect to these concerns, participant #32 commented that "the division is not very



well prepared to deal with this issue and will have a major problem filling these positions.” On a more positive note, participant #53 stressed,

Our school division has recognized a need to develop leadership and has worked on implementing ‘Leadership for Learning’. A committee has outlined the growth plan for principals which is followed up with portfolio development for growth. A portion of each administration meeting involves professional development and growth in becoming an instructional leader.

Participant # 8 pointed out that “principals are encouraged to mentor staff members who are interested in administration work,” and participant #6 emphasized “there must be a conscious effort to make these positions more desirable to highly skilled teachers who would be excellent administrators. Apathy is not the answer in the recruitment or retention of in-school administrators.” Participant #13 indicated it is difficult for rural teachers to get experience in a variety of settings, and participant #11 suggested vice-principals should attend administration meetings with principals.

#### **Self-rating of the use of components of sustainable leadership.**

Responses from principals in this school division regarding the use of the essential components of sustainable leadership indicated they make the most use of *doing what’s right for students* and *maintaining a cycle of positive energy* (See Table 4.6). All other scores were in the moderate range of 2.0 to 2.5 but principals asserted they used *changing the work context and culture* the least.

**Table 4.6**  
**Principals' Rating of Their Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Rural School Division 2**  
**n = 14 4 Point Likert Scale**

Components of Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q77	Doing what's right for students	2.93	.27	High
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of positive energy	2.57	.51	High
Q76	Working together to address accountability	2.43	.51	Moderate
Q73	Deepening learning about instruction	2.36	.63	Moderate
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peers <sup>b</sup>	2.23	.83	Moderate
Q78	Developing leadership in others	2.14	.66	Moderate
Q74	Taking the long-term view	2.07	.73	Moderate
Q79	Changing the work context and culture	2.00	.68	Moderate

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = >2.5, Moderate [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = 2.0 to 2.5, Low [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = <2.0

<sup>b</sup>N = 13 one participant did not rate their work in this area

### **Insights based on discussion with the interpretive panel.**

A panel of three principals, one from an elementary school with grades K–8 and two from a school with grades K–12, met to review the results of the survey and offer their insights. In this school division when a vice-principal is assigned to a school this does not include any additional administrative time. As a result principals feel some pressure to teach in order to allow vice-principals release from the classroom to devote to administrative duties. The researcher emphasized those questions where scores fell in the highest or lowest range and solicited information that contributed to these results.

Sustainable leadership was the main focus. First the interpretive panel gave several reasons why approximately 50% of participants may not have supported involving parents in decision-making. One participant referred to discussions with

colleagues focused on this issue. The general understanding was that “when it comes down to curriculum issues and assessment issues parents expect us to be able to lead.” In these areas it was seen as important to be able to explain to parents what you were trying to do and to ask them to support these plans. “You can only have parental involvement to a certain point.” This was supported by a second panel participant who said, “My SCC [School Community Council] they trust us as professionals and they don’t want to be involved in decision-making in regards to scholastic achievement methods.” Some discussion revolved around defining *decision-making about school improvement*. One participant volunteered that parents in the school did want to be involved in decision-making with respect to facility improvements. While some parents may be interested in hearing about test results for students in the school as a whole they “were not interested in the decision-making of how we go about improving those test results.” School Community Councils (SCC) were seen by the panel members as willing to spend their money on whatever the school needs such as playground equipment, textbooks, special programs, special evenings aimed at increasing parental involvement in the school or smart boards. Following the large school division amalgamations it proved particularly important for principals to help parents to understand where existing funding exists for some types of improvement, how to request that kind of funding, and to help members of the SCC to understand their role.

The panel was also asked to comment on why 100% of survey participants agreed *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*. While acknowledging comparative test results are shared with principals so they can see how their students are doing in comparison to the province, panel members expressed strong

support for this statement. They indicated that at present no discussion at administrative meetings facilitates principals sharing their successes so other principals are exposed to new perspectives. One participant reported that feeder schools of one high school in the division are meeting “to discuss how we can get our grade eights better prepared for grade nine.” The value of this was affirmed by another member of the panel who commented “That’s really smart that you’re doing that.” However general consensus was that principals currently keep their focus on their own school with very few exceptions made.

The panel was asked about the strong support (85%) for *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates*. One panel member raised the belief that rural school principals are not as competitive in terms of seeking students for their school as urban school principals resulting in more cooperation with one another. Participants found it very easy to e-mail colleagues, felt that support for conference attendance was good, and that central office senior administrators and special education coordinators were very willing to help address issues—resulting in the statement by one panel member that “we have a first class system.”

*The primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results* raised considerable discussion. The panel members like the survey participants revealed some mixed responses to this question. “But there’s such as focus on it [test results]” seemed to sum up the frustration that some were experiencing. Comparison of test results at the school, division and provincial level was a frequent agenda item at administrative meetings. Panel members voiced some difficulties with some of the tests presently used to assess student achievement. One participant emphasized “we as professionals have to

believe the assessment is worthwhile or it can be written and it served no purpose.” Comments regarding the Assessment for Learning (AFL) reading and writing tests included: “They need to be timed properly in terms of when they are offered or kids will sabotage them.” In a closely related area panel members expressed satisfaction that about 93% of participants in the survey disagreed with *low student socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement*. Comments from all three panel members indicated that work in the areas of inclusion and differentiated instruction, are helping teachers to better address the diversity of students in their classrooms.

The panel was also asked to examine the survey results with respect to succession-planning practices. There was some frustration expressed with *principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operation of the school*. In this school division there has been a recent increased effort to assign a vice-principal to more of the schools. However, the assignment of a vice-principal did not result in more administrative time. Principals felt pressure to teach in order for their vice-principals to have some time for administrative duties. However this led to difficulties when both the principal and the vice principal were teaching concurrently. As one participant stated, “I find the frustrating thing is the number of interruptions you get.” The participant explained this is often the result of an unresolved critical issue that arises about ten minutes prior to the principal needing to head for the classroom. It was also exasperating for panel members that the assignment of a vice-principal seemed to depend on school enrollment and that other factors were not taken into consideration. One participant summed this up by saying, “Nobody thinks

they should take a look at the amount of discipline, the behavioural issues, the nature of kids, at risk students.”

The low agreement, 21% of survey participants, with *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school* drew the attention of the panel. The result of 64% neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this statement was seen to reflect the inexperience of many principals who have been in their positions for a limited number of years. It was agreed by the panel that technically a principal can be transferred from one community to another, as “You don’t get hired for a job you get hired for a division.” The panel indicated they were seeing more applications for positions where the applicant, if successful, would need to move to the new community.

The panel noted that only 21% of survey participants agreed that *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work*. One participant expanded on this by saying at meetings, “I’d say we get thank-yous and that’s about it.” One participant with previous experience in another school division felt “people here are far quicker to pass on a compliment or ... acknowledge the fact there was an extra little bit of work that was put into things.” However, panel members also shared several examples of difficulties that had arisen when a “selected group” was singled out for their efforts and achievements.

The principal’s retreat, attended by currently assigned principals, was seen as the school division trying to address that *it is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation*. One panel member declared, “I think that rejuvenation is a good word. But I think it is at the wrong time.” Discussion followed

indicating there are no really good times in the school year that it is easy to be away from your school.

The panel disagreed, as did survey participants, that *in our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career*. They did see this happening in a few individual cases. The main initiative to date has been that principals are asked to shoulder tap teachers they believe would be strong applicants for either the vice-principal or principal positions.

The panel members were asked to look closely at the results for *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*. Of the principals responding to this question 92% agreed with this statement. The panel members agreed that this is presently true for the majority of teachers. They felt that while some may wonder about the long hours, others are concerned about the number of new initiatives. Teachers see “the principal acts as the buffer between the central office staff, the initiatives and the staff” and this is not something teachers want to do. In terms of the repeat discipline problems teachers “don’t want to be dealing with that stuff.” One panel member indicated that principals do need to convey to teachers there is “something satisfying” about pulling “the resources and the people together” in order to solve problems. It is important that teachers are aware that principals feel “I’m doing this because I like doing it.”

Panel members reviewed the Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership. One member quickly started “this is kind of a reflection of [named the school division]...this is kind of where we are.” One member believed that collaborative scoring across the staff was evidence they were “working better together as a group.” Efforts to

maintain a positive energy cycle were viewed as important especially when facing tough issues. In spite of the many new initiatives “it goes back to the buffer” and is so essential to ensure taking the time to celebrate successes along the way. Some concerns were raised regarding working together to address accountability. There is a danger in being too focused on the assessments as then “all of a sudden the pressures and the tension that it creates goes back against the kids.” Some discussion centred on administrators who use positions in rural Saskatchewan settings in order to be eligible to move to larger centres and become superintendents or directors. This led to raising the problem created when people move up, meaning there are now more open positions created that have to be filled in turn. This combined with an increasing number of principals retiring this year has meant more openings than usual. However, the panel agreed there were more internal candidates this year who were stepping forward. Generally, the panel agreed that the shoulder tapping of suitable candidates was helping in this process and more individuals were having the confidence to step forward. The consensus was expressed as, “we’re seeing lots of that this year” and “they’ve done some good ground work on that one this year.” As one member of the panel shared, “I think there are a lot of people who for whatever reasons they don’t see themselves in that way” so encouragement from others is important. The panel suggested having superintendents and others from central office involved in shoulder tapping could prove to be beneficial, as well.

Closing comments raised some issues specific to rural school divisions. Panel members agreed there is still a strong feeling expressed that more movement is needed within the division. Panel members when recommending some of their teachers for administrative openings received comments like “there hasn’t been enough movement



here” and “we need an outsider to come in.” Transfers remain a big concern as it is very difficult for families to relocate and it is often hard to sell a house in a small town. Overall a transfer for many individuals “is really, really difficult.” In addition there is criticism when teachers live outside of the community and are not always seen at community functions.

Another issue, supported by all three panel members, was the “complexity of being a principal living in the same community.” It is absolutely vital “to have someone that’s got a clear sense of what’s important for kids” and this individual has “to be balanced enough to take the gutsy move and do it and just hang in there.” Overall living in or out of community can bring problems. One participant summed this up by saying,

That’s the paradox. That’s one of the advantages of not living here and one of the disadvantages. When you don’t live in the community you can distance yourself from all those awkward, not very nice situations that can occur. On the other hand then there’s times when you feel you need to put yourself into those situations.

One panel member stressed that bringing in outsiders to fill an administrative position was often a temporary fix, as they are often planning to move on. The alternative of “take people who are here and support them and give them the opportunity” may result in better succession planning. These people can take the things we are working on and continue the progress. The panel agreed there was evidence of growing confidence in hiring more candidates from within the division.

### Urban School Division 1: Phase One

This Saskatchewan urban school division has approximately 40 school principals, with enrolled elementary students, who were eligible to participate in this study. The researcher contacted those principals who were in charge of schools that were open to the public. Principals of alternate schools or schools with a known religious affiliation were not contacted. In this school division, 48% of principals agreed to participate and 95% of this group responded to the survey. All of these principals were in charge of schools with all of their students at the elementary school level. None of these administrators had regular assigned teaching duties in classrooms.

#### **Knowledge of components of sustainable leadership.**

Principal responses in this school division indicated a high level of knowledge of the essential components of sustainable leadership for 27/40 of the individual survey questions. In descending order the highest scores were for: *principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning; it is important to support student learning that requires higher order thinking skills; teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization; principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers; principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour they expect from staff; teachers need to be valued as professionals; the principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement; and positive, respectful, working relationships need to be established for all levels and between levels within the educational system* (See Table 4.7).

Principals' scores in this school division were lowest in response to *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*, which scored in the

**Table 4.7**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Urban School Division 1**  
**n = 19    5 Point Likert Scale**

Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q13	Success for all students	4.95	.229	High
Q14	Higher order thinking skills	4.89	.315	High
Q20	Learning organization	4.89	.315	High
Q23	Teachers learning with peers	4.89	.315	High
Q24	Model professional behaviour	4.89	.315	High
Q41	Valued professionals	4.89	.315	High
Q48	Principal leadership crucial	4.89	.315	High
Q49	Working relationships	4.89	.315	High
Q26	Professional networks	3.95	.405	Moderate
Q15	Affect on other schools	3.68	.315	Moderate
Q17*	Test results	3.47	.964	Low
Q11*	Focus on our students	1.47	.964	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

<sup>b</sup>N = 18 one participant did not respond to one question in this category

low category. Over ninety-four percent of principals had agreed with this statement. A low score was also evident in response to *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results*. Lower scores within the moderate range were attained for *principals need to consider how specific actions that they plan to implement will affect the students in other schools* and to *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates*. All other scores fell between 4.89 and 3.95 which are within the high or moderate range. To view all other scores, see Appendix I.

In a written response to the survey questions, participant #2 expressed that,  
as school leaders we must take the time to build positive relationships with staff.

We must also take the time when new to a building, to assess where staff are at in their learning, so we know where we need to go. Time and relationships are two of the most valuable pieces of sustainable leadership.

Participants #26 and #21 also saw building relationships as essential. Participant #26 emphasized, “it takes time to become aware of the leadership strength available in a school.” Similarly, participant #14 stated, “the administrative team at the school level needs to model shared leadership with staff members and students. This means encouraging those with certain areas of expertise to step forward to offer leadership within their areas of expertise.” Participant #26 echoed this by saying, “We cannot do it all and, furthermore, we should not try to do it all.”

Participant #49 cautioned, “the principal cannot effectively lead a school in isolation. There must be a sense and visible recognition that staff and community have a role in this journey. There must also be an expectation that teacher autonomy is not the answer.” Participant #42 indicated,

sustainable leadership necessitates formal and informal support networks for those in leadership roles. There is no way to ‘train’ leaders for the multitude of challenges they face and will face in our schools. For this reason, leaders also need to feel supported.

Participant #42 expressed a concern that proper supports are not always provided and testified that, “once selected to this position, I was left to learn on my own.” This participant felt that it was essential to have “shared leadership within a school and outside of the school” and that

it is through networks in [and] between schools that we can provide supports for change and accountability mechanisms without relying solely on administration within a school. The best PD and accountability structures are those that provide professionals with opportunities to move forward together – feel like they own their learning and successes and support each other through areas requiring further development.

Individual concerns were raised about a narrow focus on academic achievement (participant #45), some teachers do not support system initiatives and do not participate fully in professional development opportunities (participant #49) and the time commitment required of principals to deal with teachers who are resistant to change (participant #25). Participant #25 highlighted that mandated change requires adequate time for teachers to adjust and that “the most resistance is when they are not being given enough information in advance.” Participant #14 raised the importance of working closely with the School Community Council, while participant #49 believed that dissension within School Community Council and the associated hostility and lack of trust make the principal’s work challenging.

Contextual issues were raised by some participants. Participant #42 expressed the idea that, “I feel that it is in smaller schools that sustainable leadership is the most difficult” due to the many commitments that principals and vice-principals are expected to accommodate in these schools. Participant #2 believed that in some schools there is more time that can be devoted to sustainable leadership. It was also acknowledged by Participant #21 that “each neighbourhood has its own unique characteristics, what works in one school may not work as well in another.” Participant #47 stated that “the inherent

norms in a school have a huge impact on sustainable leadership” and may need to be re-examined and evaluated in terms of effect on student achievement.

### **Current succession-planning practices.**

Responses by principals regarding succession-planning practices indicated that there was moderate support of sustainable leadership in some areas as set out in Table 4.8. These included the responses to: *there are opportunities to develop leadership at the different levels, beginner to advanced; selection committees are inclusive with respect to gender, race, and culture when selecting candidates for the elementary school principalship; external candidates are considered for formal leadership positions; and principals understand the importance of good communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly assigned principal, to ensure appropriate continuity for school improvement.* Somewhat lower moderate scores were received for *principals in the school division are expected to discuss career plans with each teacher on a regular basis; the school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship; and it is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation.*

Responses to individual questions were in the low range for eleven of the twenty questions. Principals gave the lowest score to *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands.* The next lowest rating by principals was given to *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school.* This was followed by *in our school division a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher’s career, and the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to*

**Table 4.8**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Succession-Planning Practices in Urban School Division 1**  
**n=19 5 Point Likert Scale**

Succession-Planning Practices		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q56	Leadership development	4.00		Moderate
Q59	Equal opportunity	4.00		Moderate
Q60	External candidates	4.00		Moderate
Q62	Continuity of direction	4.00		Moderate
Q54	Teacher career plans	3.84		Moderate
Q58	Pool of candidates	3.79		Moderate
Q68	Rejuvenation	3.63		Moderate
Q52	Criteria for leadership positions communicated	2.68		Low
Q63	Support to maintain focus	2.68		Low
Q65	Nurture leadership skills	2.63		Low
Q70	Rewards and recognition	2.63		Low
Q71	Involved in transfer decisions	2.58		Low
Q61*	View of the principal's role	2.05		Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*continue their work.* Principals, to a lesser degree, indicated low scores for two other questions: *the criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division* and *principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operations for the school.* The mean of all responses not included in the table fell between 3.63 and 2.68 (See Appendix I). It was noted that responses of principals fell within the upper end of the low range for four other individual questions.

Principals provided written responses on the survey regarding succession-planning practices. Participant #52 expressed an opinion that the professional

development opportunities for teachers and the mentoring and modeling processes within the school division supported successful succession planning. Nevertheless, Participant #45 indicated “few staff [members] have expressed any interest in being an in-school administrator.” Participant #50 indicated that principals may be appointed to a school where due to the work of the previous administration it may be necessary to “focus on rebuilding a positive and trusting collaborative culture before it is possible to move forward on any other areas.”

Participant #49 felt the professional development offered specifically to recently appointed principals was really offered too late in the school year. This participant shared, “had I been new to the system without an established network, my first year would have been monumentally more challenging. My informal mentors were invaluable.” Participant #39 indicated, “Leadership development in my school division is essentially in the form of seminars and meetings for those already in the positions. I don’t feel we are in the forefront of this leadership area.”

Concern was expressed by participant #48 that only “a few senior people (deputy director and above) know the succession-planning practices.” Participant #42 commented with respect to appointments to the principalship “the target moves from year to year....there still appears to be a ‘boys[’] club’ in terms of leadership” and further that “there does not seem to be a clearly defined leadership model.” This participant also felt that women with young children require more encouragement and support than is normally provided in the school division.



General concerns were expressed about principal transfers. Participant #14 asserted, “there seems to be very little foreshadowing of admin[istrative] changes between schools.” Participant # 25 stated that,

Principals are not involved and are often upset and confused about the choices made in which they have no input.... There appears to be little discussion with principals about their placements or what their strengths or weaknesses are that make a change happen without the principal knowing it is coming.

In a similar vein, participant #14 pointed out that although principals are asked to fill out ‘intentions forms’ regarding administration in the following school year, these appear to be disregarded.

#### **Self-rating of the use of components of sustainable leadership.**

Principals rated their own use of the essential components of sustainable leadership. These ratings indicated strong use for half of the components and moderate use for the remaining components, as shown in Table 4.9. The category of *doing what’s right for students* was scored as used consistently by 100% of participants from this school division. From this group of participants, 74% reported consistently using *encouraging peers to learn from peers* whereas only 39% indicated consistently using *changing the work context and culture in their work as principal*.

**Table 4.9**  
**Principals' Rating of Their Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Urban School Division 1**  
**n = 19    4 Point Likert Scale**

Components of Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q77	Doing what's right for students	3.00	.00	High
Q75	Peers learning from peers	2.74	.452	High
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of positive energy	2.58	.51	High
Q78	Developing leadership in others	2.53	.61	High
Q74	Taking the long-term view	2.42	.77	Moderate
Q73	Deepening learning about instruction	2.42	.51	Moderate
Q79	Changing the work context and culture <sup>b</sup>	2.39	.50	Moderate
Q76	Working together to address accountability	2.37	.60	Moderate

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = >2.5, Moderate [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = 2.0 to 2.5, Low [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = <2.0

<sup>b</sup>N = 18 One participant did not rank their work on this component

### **Insights based on discussion with the interpretive panel.**

A panel of three principals, all from schools with grades K-8 met to review the results of the survey and offer their insights. In this school division principals are free to devote 100% of their time to administration. The researcher emphasized those questions where scores fell in the highest or lowest range and solicited information that contributed to these results.

The panel for this school division looked first at sustainable leadership and strongly agreed that *principals need to keep the primary focus in the school on improving teaching and learning*. One member emphasized “that is now the corporate message” while a second member conveyed this by summing up, “All we do is about increased learning. Everything we do.”

Panel members were asked about survey responses where over 88% agreed with the statement *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*. It was pointed out that principals are often asked to cooperate on making the most effective use of educational assistants across the system for the benefit of all special needs students. It was also acknowledged that “it’s a growing area,” one in which the use of Professional Development Teams (pseudonym) was having a very positive initial impact. These have been introduced recently and all teachers and administrators are part of a team, where they have a chance to learn with their peers, often peers with similar responsibilities or in schools facing similar challenges. All panel members believed there was a growing commitment to working within the Professional Development Teams in a way that would benefit students across a variety of school settings.

Panel members discussed *an important part of the principal’s work is to align the vision of the school with the vision of the school division* which was supported by 100% of survey participants. One member commented, “I think we are really protective. We really don’t want our teachers to be over extended so we work really hard at making sure that everything aligns.”

*The primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results* raised considerable comment. One member of the panel indicated recent statements by senior administrators suggest test results to a wide variety of assessments have “taken on a new prominence” and then, as “you move to evidence-based that is going to become more and more paramount.” These tests often “have a short turn-around-times” and create “a high-pressure time” for teachers. However the results allow schools “to use this information to help with next year’s planning document.” While perhaps not the primary goal,

improved test results run a close second and are definitely used to guide strategic planning and where to dedicate your resources. Another member of the panel pointed out that the testing only focuses on about 30% of the curriculum areas schools teach.

Panel members commented on the results for *equal effort must be invested in professional development and accountability for student learning* where over 89% of survey participants agreed with this statement. Members of the panel emphasized that professional development must be of a high *quality* and *appropriate*. One panel member indicated that teachers, as supported in recent research, are often commenting that they benefit more from time spent with other teachers than by attending sessions offered by one-time presenters. Teachers meeting with teachers from other schools was seen by principals as providing more opportunity to talk about application and integration. Panel members were able to discuss recent system professional development offerings and indicate which were most highly valued by their teachers.

Panel members noted that 100% of survey participants agreed that *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement*. One panel member was presently working with parents who strongly prefer to focus on the success of their child and who would like to micro-manage the school for the benefit of their child. In a second case the panel member indicated,

I don't ask the parents so much as to what should be in the planning document but I bring evidence of why we are doing what we are going to do in the planning document. Then I suggest to them the big contribution in our planning document is the SCC's role to then share this with the rest of the community.

A third panel member articulated a similar theme by stating: “The SCC is large, they’re enthusiastic and they just want to support.” All panel members agreed the type of involvement in decision-making “will depend on who your community is.”

The panel was asked to comment on *teacher professional autonomy includes taking collective responsibility for student learning*. Progress was reported particularly in how survey results are received. “That survey does not represent what has been done in one year. And I think people are getting that.” Panel members indicated we all share the responsibility but also take time to celebrate successes.

At this point panel members turned their attention to succession-planning practices. First they discussed the result that 11% of survey participants disagreed with the statement *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*. Members of the panel indicated comments like “I wouldn’t do your job for anything” are frequently made and that only a few people are interested in becoming a principal. The panel raised various explanations. Teachers in general were viewed by the members of the panel as very aware that principals act as a buffer for staff. Some parts of the principal’s duties are seen as “not pleasant socially” but these are sometimes the part that receives the most publicity. Teachers are well aware that principals have to balance their work and their family life. Many teachers see the role as too demanding and want to be in a position to put family first especially if they have a young family. The old idea of “duty first, family second” is not accepted by the younger generation. This discussion concluded with the statement, “I think that maybe we don’t do a good enough job to tell them how exciting it is” to be part of many of the daily aspects of being the principal and that teachers are left with a false impression.

Discussion also ensued with respect to *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school.*” While only 36% of survey participants agreed with this statement 31% strongly disagreed. Panel members all knew people who had been quite surprised to learn they were being transferred and so would think “there hadn’t been any consultation” in these cases. Although principals in this school division are asked to fill out a form annually about their intentions panel members were not sure how much influence this process had on administrative transfers. One panel member related an experience where he/she was asked about their administrative placement and “that made me feel validated, that made me feel like they are actually listening to me... It was really nice!” However, all panel members felt this was a rare occurrence.

The panel was asked to direct their attention to the survey response to *the criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division.* One panel member indicated the recently developed form used by principals to assess the work of applicants for an administrative position was changed *drastically* last year (spring 2010). “They never told anybody, there was no centralized PD to say this is why, this is what we’re looking for.” Panel members believed an opportunity for principals to reach a common understanding of how to use the tool when assessing an applicant would result in more equity. The panel members believed there is now a performance task for applicants to complete and two separate interviews. All of these recent developments may have contributed to the wide variety of responses to this particular survey question.

During closing comments one member of the panel concluded: “I think good principals are good at relationships: relationships with students, relationships with staff members, relationship with community [members].” A second member built on this by contributing: “I think ultimately it still comes down to the full relationship piece...That just comes with time; it comes with a good sense of self, and willingness to show vulnerability, that you’re learning and that there is some little give and take.” One member raised the challenge principals face with the teachers who resist change. “That’s still one of the big elephants that are still out there when it comes to leadership” and the system needs to have more effective ways to deal with these teachers who do “nothing for the credibility of the profession.” The last member of the panel raised the importance of ensuring “a high quality of training for teachers” as presently “we spend a lot of time and money, resources, energy on convincing people to do things they don’t want to do.”

### **Urban School Division 2: Phase One**

This Saskatchewan urban school division had approximately 40 school principals eligible to participate in this study. The researcher contacted those principals who were in charge of schools that were open to the public. Principals of alternate schools or schools with a known religious affiliation were not contacted. In this school division, 23% of principals agreed to participate and 80% of this group responded to the survey. These principals were in charge of schools with all of their students at the elementary school level.

### **Knowledge of components of sustainable leadership.**

Principals' perceptions about the essential components of sustainable leadership ranked high for 19/40 individual questions. As presented in Table 4.10, principals in this school division expressed 100% support that *principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour that they expect from staff*. Strong disagreement was shown to *low student socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement*. Principals' responses indicated a strong belief that *principals must maintain a strong emphasis on collaboration with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, and community members*. Although slightly lower, principals' responses resulted in high scores for *internal accountability at the school level, for what students learn, is essential for school improvement; principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement; principals need to model shared leadership; learning needs to occur at all levels: student, teacher, parent, and administrator; teachers need to be valued as professionals and the principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement*. Responses of principals in this school division indicated a very united front in terms of agreement or disagreement in these areas that scored in the high range.

Principals' responses resulted in a low mean of 2.0 for *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school*. The next lowest score, falling at the upper end of the low range, asserted *principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools*. The next lowest scores fell within the moderate range. These were responses to *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates* and *the primary goal of authentic school*



**Table 4.10**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Urban School Division 2**  
**n = 8    5 Point Likert Scale**

Sustainable Leadership	Mean	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q24    Model professional behaviour	5.00	.000	High
Q34*   Socioeconomics defeat teacher effort	4.88	.354	High
Q45    Collaboration at the local level	4.88	.354	High
Q21    Internal accountability	4.75	.463	High
Q31    Culture seeking improvement	4.75	.463	High
Q37    Model shared leadership	4.75	.463	High
Q40    Learning at all levels	4.75	.463	High
Q41    Teachers valued as professionals	4.75	.463	High
Q48    Principal leadership crucial	4.75	.463	High
Q17*   Test results	3.75	.866	Moderate
Q26    Professional networks	3.87	.354	Moderate
Q15    Affect on other schools	3.50	1.069	Low
Q11*   Focus on own students	2.00	.926	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*improvement is improved test results.* The mean, for all other scores not included in this table, fell in the high or upper moderate range between 4.75 and 3.75. To view all scores, see Appendix I.

Individual comments in response to the survey identified two concerns. Participant #41 indicated that in some school divisions, the provision of resources to teachers is handled at the division level “leaving no latitude for principals.” Participant #9 emphasized that “sustainable leadership extends into providing students with leadership opportunities.” Participant #41 commented on contextual issues by stating, “A principal’s opportunities for distributed leadership depend greatly on the leadership

qualities in the professionals in the building. There are times to increase that distribution and there are times [,] when that is not in the students' best interests."

### **Current succession-planning practices.**

Principals' responses to questions regarding succession-planning practices, as set out in Table 4.11, indicated moderate and low support for various aspects of sustainable leadership. The highest score of principals with respect to current succession-planning practices was in response to *teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction* which was rated at the upper end of the moderate range. In descending order this was followed by the response for *selection committees are inclusive with respect to gender, race, and culture when selecting candidates to the elementary school principalship; there are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced; nurturing the long-term potential of employees is valued in your school division; the school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship* and *external candidates are considered for formal leadership positions*.

Principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices were ranked as low in terms of support for sustainable leadership as indicated by their response of 75% agreement, that *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*. This was also apparent in their response when 72.5% of principals disagreed that *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work*. Principals' responses resulted in low scores for: *principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure changes are well established; principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different*

**Table 4.11**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Succession-Planning Practices in Urban School Division 2**  
**n = 8 5 Point Likert Scale**

Succession-Planning Practices		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q53	Leadership opportunities	4.50	.756	Moderate
Q59	Equal opportunities	3.88	.991	Moderate
Q56	Leadership development	3.88	.991	Moderate
Q55	Long-term potential	3.75	1.035	Moderate
Q58	Pool of candidates	3.75	1.165	Moderate
Q60	External candidates	3.75	1.165	Moderate
Q68	Need for rejuvenation	3.00	1.309	Low
Q66*	Lack of support	3.00	.926	Low
Q63	Support to maintain focus	2.75	1.165	Low
Q71	Involved in transfer	2.50	1.069	Low
Q67	5 years in a school	2.50	1.069	Low
Q61*	View of the principal's role	2.38	.744	Low
Q70	Rewards and recognition	2.38	.916	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*school; principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operation of the school; a principal is often left alone 'to just do the job' without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills; and it is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation.* All other scores not listed in the table had a mean between 3.75 and 3.00 and fell in the moderate range. To see all scores for individual survey questions, see Appendix I.

Only one written comment was made with respect to succession-planning practices when participant #41 alluded to a lack of documents to be used on a system wide basis.

### **Self-rating of the use of components of sustainable leadership.**

Principals' responses to the survey suggest that they make the most use of *doing what's right for students*. (See Table 4.12) This is followed closely by *encouraging peers to learn from peers* and *equally working together to address accountability*. All other essential components were ranked by principals in the moderate range of 2.0 to 2.5.

**Table 4.12**  
**Principals' Rating of Their Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Urban School Division 2**  
**n = 8 4 Point Likert Scale**

Components of Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q77	Doing what's right for students	2.87	.35	High
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peers	2.75	.46	High
Q76	Working together to address accountability	2.75	.46	High
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of positive energy	2.50	.54	Moderate
Q78	Developing leadership in others	2.38	.52	Moderate
Q73	Deepening learning about instruction	2.25	.46	Moderate
Q74	Taking the long-term view	2.13	.64	Moderate
Q79	Changing the work context and culture	2.13	.64	Moderate

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = >2.5, Moderate [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = 2.0 to 2.5, Low [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = <2.0

### **Insights based on discussions with the interpretive panel.**

A repeated request to have three principals serve on an interpretive panel was sent to all principals presently working at the elementary school level in this school division

and resulted in only one positive response. The principal interviewed had considerable administrative experience in this school division and was from an elementary school with students in grades K-8. This individual met to review the results of the survey and offer insights. In this school division each principal is released from teaching duties to spend 100% of their time on administration but this principal chooses to teach a class in order to support improved instruction in the school. However, he/she readily acknowledged there are many settings in which this would not be possible due to the demands in the school. During the interview the researcher emphasized those questions where scores fell in the highest or lowest range and solicited information that contributed to these results.

The primary focus was on survey responses related to sustainable leadership. This participant strongly supported the 87% of participants who agreed that *principals need to provide leadership for the development of a school vision* by saying “to really have a true school vision I think you need to have the input of staff and there has to be ownership of that vision. It can’t just be the principal’s vision.” However, due to context each school would handle things differently. Therefore, “you are not too concerned about how what you do in your building might affect students in other buildings.” This statement appeared to be in contrast to the 75% of survey participants who agreed *principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools*. However, the principal interviewed clarified the principal will align their school vision with the division vision. It is the choosing of the appropriate strategies and methods of achieving the vision that will depend on the context.

Some disappointment was shared that 50% of principals responded to the survey neither disagree nor agree to *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results*. This principal indicated the school division supports *equal effort must be invested in professional development and accountability for student learning*. However, low substitute teacher availability is hampering these efforts even though substitute days are allocated for this purpose. This principal believed this might be happening due to the fact “a large part of the teaching population has got to the retirement age. We’ve hired more teachers in the last three years than we ever have in my experience.” This is also happening in other school divisions resulting in less teachers available to serve as substitute teachers and an increased number of “retired teachers coming back in and doing substitute work.”

Discussion ensued regarding the response of 100% of survey participants agreeing that *internal accountability at the school level, for what students learn, is essential for school improvement*. This principal indicated:

I think most teachers recognize we’re still really just trying to stem the tide of standardized achievement tests and using that measure of teacher accountability.

I think there is an inherent internal accountability for student learning and that’s really the accountability that you want.

In recent years there has been an increased willingness on the part of teachers to discuss teaching and learning, to use a variety of measures of growth and to look for ways to improve student learning. This has reached a stage of development in some schools where it may not be necessary that *principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers*. In these schools “I think many are looking to do it whether

there is encouragement there or not.” Within this process there is recognition by administrators that *shared leadership includes matching the needs of the school with the expertise of those involved*. In some cases the staffing of a particular school may not adequately meet the needs of “leadership in the school beyond the classroom.” There are times when individual staff members will complement each other and others when staffing creates a conflict or a void. However, this presently appears to happen “as much by accident as it is by design.”

Being part of a New Approach to Encourage Innovation (pseudonym) had given this principal new personal experiences in the area of capacity building. This has made it possible to build opportunities for teachers to collaborate into the weekly school schedule. Timetabling allows for a minimum of 45 minutes of common preparation time with another grade a-like teacher each week. Emphasis is placed on four aspects: inquiry based learning, teacher collaboration, inclusionary practice and flexible grouping of students. Groupings of students are kept flexible and students may have opportunities to work with a different group depending on the particular assignment.

On the survey, over 87% of respondents agreed that *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement*. This principal indicated with the introduction of the new SCC mandate there is a difference in “how we try to engage parents to participate.” While viewed as positive, this participant acknowledged “I don’t know that parents are always as interested in that part of it.” Instead in terms of student achievement parents are saying, “You’re the professionals, we’ll take direction from you. We like receiving information, we like the opportunity to have input and to try and support it where we can.”

Responses to the survey revealed that over 87% of principals believed *professional networks can help the new principal to cope with provincial mandates*. However, this participant explained that in dealings with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation or the local Teachers' Association principals can find themselves in adversarial position and viewed as part of management. This will be evident for all principals during the job action occurring around the time of this interview. This principal felt that the difficulties centre largely on the principal's responsibility to provide for student safety.

It was noted that 100% of principals who responded to the survey agreed that *principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement*. This principal commented that the word 'nurture' is an appropriate choice because "you can suggest, mandate all you want, but if the teachers aren't going to take it on themselves and take an ownership in it, it's pretty hard to drive instructional improvement." As part of this *the principal must guide each staff member to further develop his/her instructional skills*. This could become problematic in a large school where getting to truly know each teacher is a challenge and where finding adequate time to guide each individual is more difficult. With the number of newly hired staff members this is becoming more challenging. This principal stated "what they are doing collegially is probably bigger than the influence I might have." In this sense it may be wise to question whether the principal must personally guide this process.

This participant strongly supported the 100% of survey respondents who did not believe that *low socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement*. Although 100% of survey participants maintained that



*principals should plan how leadership responsibilities/opportunities will be distributed in their school*, this principal does not plan this. The approach used is one of indicating what is needed, and letting members of the staff step forward. Only in rare circumstances has it been necessary to shoulder tap individuals or in the absence of willingness on the part of a staff member, do the job in their stead. Can this process really be called planning? However, this principal emphasized, “I think you do need to give staff the opportunity to take on leadership roles especially if you’re hoping that one day they’re going to move into leadership roles.” While some teachers may show leadership ability in their early years as a teacher there is “nothing that takes the place of experience.”

As a secondary focus, the discussion moved to succession-planning practices. Initially the participant was asked about the high level of disagreement by survey participants that *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work*. Less than 13% of survey participants agreed with this. The panel member indicated, “I think part of this has to do with the individual’s views of career advancement.” Recognition of a monetary nature, based on size of school, in our provincial agreement has influenced principals’ thinking. This has led to a commonly accepted attitude that principals who are doing a good job should be moving to a larger school. “Because we’re not always articulate in why things happen the way they do, I think it creates a lot of discussion and tension and that people think they haven’t been recognized for their efforts.” In general, this participant felt “I don’t think there are enough things built into our system to really reward and recognize” principals or teachers. Closely related to this is the disagreement of survey participants (75%) that *principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure changes are well*

*established.* Generally principals would expect to move more regularly due to the large number of retirements and salary differences, which make moving to a larger school desirable. In fact “we are almost at a point, if you have been in a school five years, people are thinking something’s wrong.” By recognizing years of experience, it might get away from using size of school as an indicator of promotion. It might also make it more desirable to work in a community school, which although “those aren’t your largest schools usually they are your most difficult administration locations.”

A low indication of agreement (25%) that *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school* was noticed. Although principals can complete a form requesting a transfer this participant is not sure to what degree this is part of the decision-making around principal transfers. In some cases it may be considered, in others it is not.

Another area of discussion focused on the mixed response for *a principal is often left alone ‘to just do the job’ without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills.* This principal responded, “I think there are lots of gaps. A lot of on-the-job training” may be necessary. At the moment there is no formal mentorship program and it was suggested that this could help to remedy part of the problem as superintendents, while supportive, do not have a lot of time to spend out in the schools.

Responses to, *it is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation,* resulted in scores that were very wide-spread. This participant felt this may be a result of the fact that the system senior administration do not control the demands placed on principals. “It is a cascade of expectation” coming from a

multitude of sources including the parents, the students, the staff, the Board of Education and the provincial ministry and these demands may arise concurrently. What used to be a work-life balance is now *a three-way balance* between school, expectations, and life. The balance you have “depends on how each side is going at any given moment.” There are times when one will need to sacrifice somewhere and there will always be a need to prioritize. “There are not enough hours in the day to do all the things that you’re being asked to do.”

Upon viewing a chart of the Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership based on school division responses to the survey this principal commented, “I’m surprised the accountability piece is so high.” In addition, this principal emphasized a belief that internal accountability is what drives teachers. External comments regarding school test results are far less motivating for teachers. Surprise was also expressed about the lowest score for *changing the work context and culture*. This principal’s experiences with younger staff have resulted in a belief that more attention needs to be focused on this area.

As a final comment this principal raised the issue that some are becoming principals at an early point in their career and have limited teaching experience. “Some of our people are becoming vice-principals inside their first two years of teaching and becoming principals before they get to their tenth year of teaching.” They will be principals for many years and “we often talk about how people lose perspective once they get out of the classroom.” It will be essential to keep these people closely connected to teaching and learning. Another important problem to address is the issue of people who become principals who are not successful; in their new role. Some of these individuals

know “I’m not really cut out for this,” while in other cases senior administrators know “you’re really not cut out for this.” Presently, it is extremely rare for these people to return to their former role even if this might be better for all concerned. With people being promoted even earlier in their career, it will be essential to address this issue.

### **Survey Results for the Four School Divisions: Phase One**

The survey participants were principals in Saskatchewan from schools within two urban school divisions and two rural school divisions. Of the original total of 148 principals eligible to participate in the survey 54 agreed to participate. The electronic survey, which utilized Web Survey Tool, was posted on-line for the month of February, 2011. During this month reminders were sent to those still needing to complete the survey. This resulted in the completion of fifty surveys, a participation rate of 93% of the willing participants across the four school divisions.

During the statistical analysis, a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was generated to determine the internal reliability of the test instrument. An analysis of the total survey instrument made up of 68 items resulted in a Cronbach Alpha = .907 which is considered high. For the three main sections of the survey instrument: 40 items on sustainable leadership–Cronbach Alpha = .876, 20 items on succession-planning practices–Cronbach Alpha = .888, and 8 items on the use of the components of sustainable leadership–Cronbach Alpha= .666.

#### **Knowledge of components of sustainable leadership.**

Composite results from the four school divisions indicated principals possessed a high knowledge of the components of sustainable leadership for 21/40 individual

questions. The highest mean scores were in response to *principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour they expect from staff; teachers need to be valued as professionals; the principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement and positive, respectful, working relationships need to be established at all levels and between levels within the educational system.* The next highest scores were in response to: *principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning; teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization; principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement; and learning needs to occur at all levels: student, teacher, parent, and administrator.* These individual item results are presented in Table 4.13. However, scores for fourteen other individual questions fell at the lower end of the high range.

Composite results from the four school divisions indicated principals had a low knowledge of the components of sustainable leadership for 3/40 individual questions. The lowest mean score was in response to *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school.* At the upper end of the low range were *principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools* and *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results.* The remaining 16/40 mean scores fell in the moderate range between 4.5 and 3.5. To view all scores, see Appendix I.

**Table 4.13**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Four School Divisions**  
**n = 50    5 Point Likert Scale**

Sustainable Leadership		Mean	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q24	Model professional behaviour	4.86	.351	High
Q41	Valued professionals	4.80	.452	High
Q48	Principal leadership crucial	4.80	.404	High
Q49	Working relationships	4.80	.404	High
Q13	Success for all students	4.78	.567	High
Q20	Learning organization	4.74	.443	High
Q31	Culture seeing improvement	4.74	.443	High
Q40	Learning at all levels	4.72	.454	High
Q15	Affect on other schools	3.48	.953	Low
Q17*	Test results	3.34	.982	Low
Q11*	Focus on own students	1.64	.802	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Knowledge in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

### **Current Succession-planning practices.**

Principals' responses to questions regarding present succession-planning practices in their school divisions resulted in much lower mean scores. No score across the four school divisions were in the high range, 6/20 mean scores were in the moderate range and the remaining 14/20 mean scores were in the low range. In addition, the researcher noted the standard deviation for most questions reflected a wide variability in perceptions regarding the individual questions on the survey regarding succession-planning practices.

Although in the moderate range, the highest scores were regarding: *teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction; principals understand the importance of good communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly assigned principal, to ensure appropriate continuity for school*

*improvement; external candidates are considered for formal leadership positions; and there are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced.*

These results are presented in Table 4.14.

The lowest mean score across the composite of the four school divisions was in response to *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands*. The next lowest mean scores were in response to *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work and principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school*. Although still in the low range slightly higher mean scores resulted from principal's responses to *in our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career; and the criteria for formal leadership*

**Table 4.14**  
**Highest and Lowest Scores: Principals' Perceptions of Succession-Planning Practices in Four School Divisions**  
**n = 50    5 Point Likert Scale**

Succession-Planning Practices		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q53	Leadership opportunities	3.94	.767	Moderate
Q62	Continuity of direction	3.86	.833	Moderate
Q60	External candidates	3.84	.889	Moderate
Q56	Leadership development	3.82	.800	Moderate
Q52	Criteria for leadership positions communicated	2.92	1.275	Low
Q65	Nurture leadership skills	2.88	1.118	Low
Q71	Involved in transfer decisions	2.68	1.133	Low
Q70	Rewards and recognition	2.58	.906	Low
Q61*	View of principal role	2.02	.892	Low

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = >4.5, Moderate [Level of Succession-Planning Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = 3.5 to 4.5, Low [Level of Succession Planning-Practices in Agreement with Current Research] = < 3.5

*positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division.* All other mean scores were between 3.82 and 2.92. To view all scores, see Appendix I.

### **Self-rating of the use of components of sustainable leadership.**

Principal responses indicated that they used *doing what's right for students* more than any other component in their work as a principal. Other components were used in various degrees but least of all *changing the work context and culture*. To review all mean scores see Table 4.15 regarding the four school divisions and their use of the components of sustainable leadership.

**Table 4.15**  
**Principals' Rating of Their Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership in**  
**Four School Divisions**  
**n = 50    4 Point Likert Scale**

Components of Sustainable Leadership		M	SD	Rating <sup>a</sup>
Q77	Doing what's right for students	2.94	.240	High
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peers	2.61	.606	High
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of positive energy	2.58	.499	High
Q73	Deepening learning about instruction	2.36	.563	Moderate
Q78	Developing leadership in others	2.38	.602	Moderate
Q74	Taking the long-term view	2.28	.701	Moderate
Q79	Changing the work context and culture	2.14	.645	Moderate
Q76	Working together to address accountability	2.44	.541	Moderate

<sup>a</sup>Rating Scale: High [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = >2.5, Moderate [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = 2.0 to 2.5, Low [Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership] = <2.0

### **Insights based on discussions with the interpretive panels.**

The interpretive panels conducted in each of the four school divisions would concur with results in the area of sustainable leadership. Areas of strength and weakness varied slightly across the school divisions.



Interpretive panels highlighted many of the same strengths and weaknesses with respect to current succession-planning practices. Interpretive panels affirmed strongly that *most teachers view the role of the principal as one of never-ending demands*. They pointed out this is not an accurate perception and one they would like to see addressed. In addition many panel members did not accept that principals were any busier in their jobs than classroom teachers. In many cases the interpretive panel members believed there were ways to highlight the positive aspects of being a principal.

Interpretive panels also agreed with the results of the survey in terms of voicing several common concerns with present succession-planning practices. Considerable discussion focused on a lack of formal criteria that are established for formal leadership positions and widely communicated to all teachers. While some panel members believed the criteria might be found on school division websites or embedded in applications for formal leadership positions no one seemed able to articulate the criteria. Panel members voiced that this was a source of frustration for principals, prospective applicants and particularly those who were denied a position.

Another area that resulted in considerable discussion was in the area of principals being involved in transfer decisions. While principals could request a transfer, no one felt principals could be assured of personal involvement in a decision regarding their transfer to a new school. It was acknowledged that a few principals were personally involved but this was viewed as the rare exception.

In spite of consistently ranking their use of *doing what's right for students* higher than all other components the researcher noted a dearth of comments on surveys or

during interpretive panels to explain this. As a result this was actively pursued at the next phase of the study.

Each panel was asked about the least use of the component *changing the work culture and context*. This was generally explained as dependent on context. If there was a collaborative staff in place panel members felt there would not be as great a need to work on this area. While the survey results reflected the work across a school division panel members believed some individual principals would be emphasizing work in this area.

### **Summary of the Results for Phase One**

Phase one included a survey conducted in four school divisions in Saskatchewan. An interpretive panel, usually including three principals, met with the researcher to review the data collected from their school division and to assist the researcher with the interpretation of the data. In many cases members of the interpretive panels, with their knowledge of the local setting, were able to explain some of the unique situations that resulted in the responses of principals from their school division.

In all four school divisions, knowledge of sustainable leadership resulted in higher mean scores than succession-planning practices. However, there are specific areas in which knowledge of sustainable leadership could be expanded. Particularly troubling to the researcher were the participants' responses in all four school divisions to: *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school (Q11\*)*, *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results (Q17\*)*, and *principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other*

*schools* (Q15). Principals' perceptions consistently indicated a low level of knowledge in these three areas that ran counter to what previous research has indicated as necessary when providing sustainable leadership for school improvement. In some school divisions participant responses to *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement* (Q25) and *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates* (Q26) also indicated areas warranting attention at the school division level.

If school divisions want sustainable leadership, there are changes they could make resulting in succession-planning practices that are more supportive of the desired outcome. Responses to the survey in all four school divisions indicated the lowest level of agreement with current research for: *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands* (Q61\*) and *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work* (Q70). There is an urgent need for all four school divisions involved in this study to address these succession-planning practices. Similarly school divisions could consider changes in light of perceptions expressed regarding *principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school* (Q71), *the criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division* (Q52), and *in our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career* (Q65).

All survey participants ranked their own use of the essential components of sustainable leadership. Results indicated the lowest use of the components *working together to address accountability* (Q76), *changing the work context and culture* (Q79),

and *taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals* (Q74). Neglect of any of the essential components of sustainable leadership will have a negative impact on student learning. School divisions may need to take steps to encourage more consistent use of all of the components of sustainable leadership.

Survey results indicated progress to date. There was evidence of growing knowledge in the area of essential components of sustainable leadership. Survey results also indicated areas for further growth. It appeared that succession-planning practices need to be updated to better support sustainable leadership. The interpretive panels described areas where current work is focused on addressing some of the current concerns. Further specifics as to how school divisions could respond to the survey results will be set out in chapter six.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Data Collection, Analysis, and Results for Phase Two**

Based on the survey results a purposive sample of principals from each school division was selected to be interviewed. Working from the list of those willing to be interviewed and the demographic information provided by individual participants the researcher selected a diverse group of principals to be interviewed. Over the four school divisions, candidates were selected to represent both genders, a variety of years as administrator at the current school, a variety of years of experience as a school principal, and schools from a variety of socioeconomic settings. In a total of three cases in Rural School Division 1 and Urban School Division 2, those who were on the interpretive panels were the only principals who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. Three principals were interviewed from all school divisions except Urban School Division 2 where only two principals were willing to be interviewed.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used. The primary focus was on sustainable leadership and the researcher kept in mind the eight components described in the current research literature when probing for information. The secondary focus was on current succession-planning practices and the four areas from the current research provided a framework for this discussion.

On the basis of the interviews, a case study for each school division was developed indicating principals' perceptions regarding their own sustainable leadership and present succession-planning practices within the school division. In this chapter school division case studies are followed by a composite of the four school divisions.

Responses from interviews were from self-identified and willing participants. Anonymity is protected by identifying participants by a pseudonym they chose during the interview process. Each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym commonly associated with their own gender. In a few cases highly sensitive information was shared. The researcher chose to further protect these participants by not identifying, by use of a pseudonym, which participant shared this information. In addition a few general comments to reflect school division attitudes were included where identifying the specific contributor was not seen to be helpful.

### **Case Study for Rural School Division 1: Phase Two**

Three principals, one female and two males, were interviewed from this rural school division. The pseudonyms they chose were Ryan, Jack, and Cindy. All three had only elementary level students in their school and two of the three schools had a vice-principal. Two were very experienced principals nearing retirement while the third had approximately a decade of administrative experience. All three actively sought professional development that would allow them to develop their leadership skills beyond what was offered at the monthly principals' meeting. These principals were prepared to raise questions about division or provincial mandates to ensure they were in the best interests of students and criteria presently used for the appointment and placement of principals within their school division. All anticipated that in the future principals would be offered more opportunities to provide self-direction for the professional development of principals.

### **Sustainable leadership.**

Principals interviewed saw it as their job to set direction. Ryan indicated, “I think our job, as kind of the ship master...is to set the direction.” When doing this the principals weighed their options in terms of what’s best for students. Jack voiced that this meant filtering decisions by asking, “What’s going to ultimately improve their [students’] learning and ultimately improve their chances to succeed in life?” Ryan expanded on this when he indicated part of this process is to consider the whole child and to include “moral and social and emotional development as well as physical and cognitive development.” In this respect, sometimes principals struggled with mandates from the division or provincial level that do not appear to fully consider the whole child and their individual learning needs. It is this that makes it important that principals ask questions about new mandates and find out the purpose behind these directives.

In light of the large number of new initiatives, principals from this rural school division viewed trying to address long-term goals as a big issue. Cindy pointed out principals must help teachers to understand that all the new initiatives come under the umbrella of “improving student learning” and that best practice in one area can often be applied in other areas. Ryan believed Common Essential Learnings<sup>2</sup> (CELs) and Required Areas of Study are two tools that help teachers to pull together many of the loose ends. Cindy expressed that aligning individual teacher goals with school goals, and school goals with system goals, was essential. However, Jack who felt pushed into shorter term planning emphasized, he had not seen a system long term plan for many years. Instead “we’ve got our own long term vision, we’ve got our own goals...and

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<sup>2</sup> These are six broad types of foundational learning [communication, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, technological literacy, personal and social values and skills, and independent learning] that are taught across all grade levels and within all subject areas

we're going to do them and we're going to be working on student success" indicated trying to maintain a long-term view.

All three principals in this school division supported Ryan's statement that "one of the most important things a leader does is to develop the potential of the people who are working" in their school. Cindy expressed this as "I think building a strong team has been really critical" so that all can work together for our students. In this situation Cindy believed everyone needs to feel comfortable asking questions like: What do you think? What would you do? How would you do it? As emphasized by Ryan people need an environment in which it is safe to take risks and make mistakes. In all three schools principals found ways to have their teachers involved in collaborative groups where the focus was on learning from each other in order to improve instruction. "Teachers contribute a lot to how things are done here and the whole teaching process" was how Cindy summarized this work.

Considerable comment was made regarding how to maintain a positive cycle of energy between and among staff members. This was aptly captured by Ryan who stated, "I think it's our job as principals to help lighten the load. There's no way you can do it all." In a similar way Cindy indicated "being able to understand that [teaching responsibilities] and to recognize the pressure that the teachers are under and trying to help them through that" is an important task for principals. All three principals agreed principals can help staff see the big picture, share ideas, break the problem down into smaller chunks, prioritize the work, and take initial steps to meet the challenge. During this work they agreed there are advantages to working within a shared leadership model. Ryan identified there is sometimes value in starting with things that are going well and



seeing what can be applied in other areas. He also believed it is essential that staff know you care and that you are willing to take the time to listen. Cindy pointed out principals need to be seen as interested in discovering “What is best practice and how can we get there?” Jack shared that for principals, as well as teachers, there are advantages of networking, where once you have established trusting relationships it is easier to seek help when facing a challenging situation. He stated the trust “it’s incredibly valuable.” In addition Ryan mentioned you need to “look after them [staff members] as a person” supporting them in tough personal times such as a serious illness or death of a family member or friend.

Gradually, principals are seeing some changes in the work context and culture. Ryan indicated “the whole dialogue on student learning will improve instruction.” Jack stressed that his staff were now ready to support student learning by making changes in the way they timetable classes, group students for learning and how they delegate staffing within their school. These upcoming changes, once in place, might lead to discovering other necessary changes. Cindy felt the biggest change she had noticed was that teachers now view test results, as the result of all previous years of teaching rather than the sole responsibility of the student’s current teacher. Cindy too had seen some willingness on the part of staff to change how students were grouped for instruction and delegating staffing to better meet student learning needs.

In spite of the comment by Cindy “it’s evolving quite a lot” and that principals and teachers are encouraged to take part in initiatives few comments were volunteered with respect to working together to address accountability. Jack felt principals need to remind senior administration of the human element that should be considered when

supporting various mandates within the division. Both Ryan and Jack voiced a concern that the provision of sustainable leadership by senior administrators at the division level was as important as by principals at the school level.

Principals from this division saw deepening learning about instruction as central to their work as a principal. Ryan had found the work on professional learning communities by Dufour was helpful in this work. At this school they have been able to timetable 40 minutes in each six day cycle for teachers to work in collaborative groups with other teachers with a focus on improving student learning. Questions to guide discussions were initially provided by the principal in order to keep the conversation very focused. In Ryan's experience over the past ten years "the depth of understanding and the amount being accomplished has increased." Teachers are now learning to interpret the data they receive and they are beginning to question some long accepted practices such as grouping students by grade. Both Ryan and Jack had staff members who are now involved in setting the professional development agenda. Jack expressed some frustration with mandates that were based on an assumption that one-size-fits-all which failed to recognize the unique needs of some of the students within the school division. He adamantly believed "we've fallen into the trap as educators...of believing that there's always one best method to do anything." Jack emphasized that we need to remember the human element and address what will work for individuals. Cindy fostered tight alignment by using the system initiatives as a base from which school initiatives were selected each year. In turn teachers set their classroom goals based on the school goals. On each of their five professional development days, staff members revisited the school goals and assess their progress to date. "If we notice significant improvement we will

carry on until we get everybody to the point that we believe they should be at. If we haven't seen enough growth, we rethink...what we need to do to get where we want to go." In two of the schools principals were aware of groups of teachers who preferred to work alone in their own classroom. When they do meet as a large group some teachers still want to rely on the principal to provide all of the leadership. At one school if the principal is not present during collaboration meetings teachers will quickly drift back to their classroom and resume what they see as more important duties. The principal of this school indicated, "I think we've come a long way but we still have a way to go." Part of the problem appeared to be an attitude on the part of some teachers that they will not learn much by working with someone who teaches at a different grade level.

Ryan thought "it's important to encourage staff to go to the next level when you see leadership within." He found it important that staff have the opportunity to plan together and to share their concerns as they worked on issues. Ryan declared, "I really believe in a shared leadership kind of model." Cindy emphasized she did not think she could succeed trying to lead alone when she said "I just don't think I could do it." Jack described letting people try things while he provided the support they needed. He liked to get people involved in planning major events, leading assemblies, making decisions for professional development and covering for administrators during their absence. All of these let teachers see if they like doing these things. In particular Jack saw serving on the Professional Development Committee as a stepping stone for those with an interest in administration. In addition, Jack has put considerable work into developing a plan for vice-principals to develop their skills over a three year period. This tool, which incorporates ten broad areas, can be used to ensure support is offered as individuals have

initial experiences in each area of administrative work even if they move to another school or are promoted to a principalship. Unfortunately, Jack has noticed that when people are promoted to a principalship and discover they do not like this kind of work we do not have any acceptable way for them to step down. “It’s a real problem in education” was how Jack viewed this issue.

All three principals were able to discuss an artifact and how they felt it represented their sustainable leadership. The areas of emphasis included: *maintaining a cycle of positive energy, developing leadership in others, and encouraging peers to learn from peers.*

#### **Succession-planning practices.**

Professional development for teachers was viewed as strong by all three principals. Funding was readily available for collaborative planning by teachers and there were consultants and coaches prepared to work with staff on this. A very positive attitude was summed up by Ryan as, “I think it is one of the best PD pieces that I have seen because it’s supportive and it’s continual.” In addition the work with potential candidates for administration as led by one superintendent was commended when Ryan stated, “They’re doing a good job with the core group for young administrators coming on board.” Principals indicated there were workshops for those who wanted to know more about administration and there was also a cohort working on graduate-level classes. One of the superintendents was providing the leadership for this initiative. To become part of this group, teachers could put their own name forward.

The process to select candidates for promotion to the principalship appeared to be a less transparent process. Cindy indicated, although there was an increased number of

openings this year, there were “lots of young people coming up who are able [and] interested in administration.” There was an existing pool of candidates for the principalship who have been interviewed. Jack indicated, people apply and have an interview but “no one knows who’s on that list, or what order they’re on that list, not even the people who are on that list.” He also described a lack of a common understanding of criteria used by stating, “Administrative appointments and selections in our division in the past few years...appear to be done randomly.” Principals were encouraged to tap potential administrative candidates on the shoulder and encourage them to consider a future in administration. Cindy believed those interested could find out the criteria by speaking to a principal.

Professional development for principals appeared to be limited to the monthly principals’ meeting. With the new mandates, Ryan felt opportunities to develop a better understanding of the issues, to identify possible barriers and ways to work through them and to find ways to address legitimate concerns were essential for all principals. Both Jack and Ryan indicated seeking leadership development opportunities such as the Saskatchewan School-Based Administrators (SSBA) modules outside of the school division. This has provided them with informal networking opportunities for many years. All three principals believed their leadership was improved by the informal networking they are able to do with their colleagues. All three principals emphasized a need for more formal mentorship within the division for all principals. Ryan speculated, “I’m not sure how well we mentor young principals” when we currently rely on very informal networking. Statements like: “I don’t think we have a sustainable leadership model in our division,” and “we haven’t had the opportunity to have leadership nurtured at our

local level” were indicative of a need of principals that was not being addressed. However, it appeared that these three principals believed the collective voices of all principals in their school division had been heard and that changes were to be made in the fall. Principals expected to have more input regarding the agendas for monthly administrative meetings and for the fall seminar. The “opportunity for some of that to be self-directed within the group of principals” was viewed as a positive change.

Retention of principals was not an area receiving much attention according to the three principals. Two of the principals were interested in taking on something new and were looking outside the school division for new challenges. Although this spring there were many vacancies for principals within the school division, all three principals believed there were lots of young applicants. However, they indicated some who are promoted will have limited prior administrative experience. At the moment there is limited support or validation for current principals from senior administration. Cindy described this situation as, “The reward comes from the daily work that we do” through interactions with the students, and teachers.

Using a similar format the researcher will present a case study for the remaining three school divisions within this study. Then the researcher will set forward a composite case study representing principals’ perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership, current succession-planning practices and the use of the components of the essential components of sustainable leadership within the four school divisions.

### **Case Study for Rural School Division 2: Phase Two**

Of the three principals interviewed, one female and two males, all had only elementary level students in their school and none had a vice-principal. The pseudonyms chosen by these principals were Anne, Spencer and Peter. They had a variety of administrative experience: one under 5 years, one between 5–10 years and one over 10 years. Two principals, while sharing information about improving student learning within their school, revealed their passion about working in this area. The three principals working in different geographical parts of the school division experienced school division amalgamation from a different context. The three principals agreed there had been some original growing pains but acknowledged that at this stage progress was apparent. Peter summarized by saying “we’re slowly moving in the right direction.”

#### **Sustainable leadership.**

No principal volunteered a statement on *doing what’s right for students* but each offered their suggestions regarding long-term planning. Peter asserted that having a good understanding of the school division’s vision was essential so the principal could ensure that the school’s vision was aligned with it. In addition he thought developing a working relationship with your superintendent would be helpful in understanding what is expected of you. Spencer described aligning the vision of the school with the vision of the school division in addition to expectations from other sources as, “I find that to be a real demanding part of my job.” Anne voiced some frustration with reserving time to work on the long-term goals as many pressing issues demand the principal’s attention. Similarly Spencer voiced, “A lot of my work is work of immediacy.” He described having so many things that must be done and so many people to answer to as “very

draining.” “I know that’s something that we don’t spend enough time on” was acknowledged by Spencer.

All three principals placed a high value on developing people. Providing opportunities for peers to learn from peers was viewed as an important part of the principals’ work. Anne stressed that, “I try to recognize the talents of all staff” and have them lead in areas of strength. Anne described in detail how she solicits the views of all staff members, encourages reflection and then they collaboratively determine “a direction that we can go.” She explained what her staff is “trying to do is a lot more team teaching and collaboration.” After personal observation of effective instruction Anne will free up teachers to go and observe in other classrooms. Anne indicated, “I am trying to change things but at a rate that is acceptable for my staff.” She also noted that when she is encountering problems she can discuss an issue with her staff and can learn by listening to their ideas. Anne declared, “What I think makes a good leader is always being willing to learn yourself.”

Spencer preferred to lead by example. Throughout his career he has modeled for others by taking part with teachers in things like having an intern, attending an SSBA Module, visiting other schools or participating in mentoring. Having “so many consultants, people that can help you” was seen as a benefit of working in a large school division.

Peter felt being aware of an individual’s past history might help you to anticipate challenges and to provide genuine support. Within the division, both he and Anne reported principals were asked to support those resistant to change by finding out exactly why they are hesitant about the proposed changes. This was found to be helpful in



encouraging a change in their perspective. Peter and Anne provided a contrasting picture of parental involvement. In Peter's recent experience he found too many parents wanted the school to handle everything whereas Anne felt she had a really strong core of School Community Council members who were very enthusiastic and supportive.

Principals made several suggestions about maintaining a positive energy cycle. Anne felt taking time to enjoy social occasions, attending professional development together and sharing humor all had a positive impact on staff. Peter highlighted the importance of taking the time to celebrate successes and letting people know they do make a difference. All of these suggestions helped staff members to face challenges together. At the principal level, Peter thought this was an area of progress within the division. "Pats on the back, the face-to-face encouragement, [and] words of support" are more evident at this stage.

Evidence of changing the work context and culture was touched on during the interviews. The demands of parents and students are changing and Spencer pointed out a recent shift reflected by an increasing number of parents who expect the school to handle everything. Peter supported this by saying, "the culture of the school is so dependent on the students, the staff, and the parents." Newly appointed teachers he believed are more accepting of supervision of their teaching and there is more evidence of collective professionalism. Spencer summed up the latter by indicating teachers used to share resources; today, teachers talk about specific lessons and may team teach.

Following some growing pains Rural School Division 2 has adopted a new attitude of "let's try to grow together." Recently, opportunities for teachers to collaborate about improved instruction are accommodated by early dismissals on Wednesdays. Each

staff can select their own goals, organize their own schedules and plan to work with their own staff or with another school. Anne has built into her staff meetings the opportunity for individuals to share the highlights of their own learning with other staff members and to encourage others to try new teaching strategies. Peter reported “there’s more collaboration between teachers, at different grade levels, and at the same grade level, within the building and somewhat outside the building.” Peter believed strongly that working collaboratively with colleagues helps teachers to provide support for each other.

Principals received additional support in their work two years ago. At a *burning issues session* principals accentuated the difficulty they were having meeting all the demands on their time. As a result, Spencer reported all principals were given “15% more admin time in every school.” “That came with the understanding that 20% of your time...would be spent on leadership for learning.” The goal was to avoid the situation where no action was taken due to the immediacy of paper work and discipline problems.

Although Anne believed their school division had good school community councils, Peter pointed out working together to address accountability was not really happening. However, in the near future he felt technology could be utilized as a tool to support rapid growth in this area.

Principals reported that *deepening the learning about instruction* had presented many challenges in the early years after amalgamation. The original efforts made to introduce professional learning communities were often unsuccessful. The predetermined groups did not work and there was a lot of negative feedback. The three principals reported more recent efforts focused on *Inquiry Based Learning* have been more successful.

Principals offered both positive and negative input. Anne thought that the format of using teacher leaders was working well within the division. She also made the statement with respect to staff professional development about Inquiry Based Learning, “I am aware as the principal that this is going on in this school but I am not the one in charge.” Peter indicated that although efforts in the area of data management were initially met with resistance “we’re slowly coming around to the acceptance of what research shows and research is based on data.” To a large degree, principals in this school division were to lead their staff in interpreting results and establishing goals for instruction. Spencer affirmed that test results such as those for Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT) or Assessment for Learning (AFL) were not utilized as fully as might be desired. He attributed resistance largely to a “lack of time or lack of adequate training for teachers to understand and interpret those results.” Peter stated principals have received some training in how to interpret test results and using this to guide classroom instruction but “it does not make us experts or true leaders in that but it does give us a thumbnail of the direction.” For this reason Peter declared it would be helpful if those with expertise could guide principals by outlining for principals: this is where the students are, this is what you need to work on, and here are some plans for how to do that with your staff. However, at the present time he believed we are using “a shot gun approach” to assessment. This is largely because educators have not done this long enough to know which measures are most effective.

Anne was enthusiastic about working with the 8–10 parents involved through the School Community Council. The emphasis appeared to be encapsulated by her statement, “I keep them informed” about our goals and then “they try to come up with

ideas to support it.” One teacher had recently provided a demonstration on using Smart Boards so that parents would be better informed. Students help to inform parents about “the neat things that are going on [in the school]” at the annual Parent Night. Aiming to “include parents as much as I possibly can” reflected Anne’s general attitude.

Developing leadership in others was an important issue for all three principals. Anne openly indicated in her school she is trying to “not have it all principal directed.” She was enthusiastic about how the school division develops leadership and concluded offering lead teachers professional development on “collaboration and how to develop collaboration” was effective. Anne was putting structures in place to encourage teachers to use “their great leadership qualities.” Both Spencer and Peter acknowledged they had more teachers stepping forward willing to lead. Spencer thought knowing your staff well helped you to match leadership skills to particular tasks. Peter similarly stated, “The reason I’m asking them is I know they can do it and handle it.” He asserted with a growth of “multiple demands,” especially in the last 2–3 years, he needs the help of the teachers.

Principals willingly shared artifacts to highlight their own sustainable leadership. Anne emphasized the development of leadership not only for herself but for one of her teachers by working collaboratively within a shared leadership model. Spencer shared two visual reminders developed collaboratively by the staff to let others make their own assessment of whether they were following the school vision or meeting school goals. Peter emphasized the importance the principal leading in a way that enhances a positive energy cycle for each member of the school team.

### **Succession-planning practices.**

Spencer acknowledged that school division amalgamation initially had an impact on professional development for teachers in a negative way. There were “a lot of new people and a lot of new initiatives at the same time” which resulted initially in a “lot of ...trial and error.” The lack of an established trust level among participants was viewed as a contributing factor. However, Spencer felt the division learned from these experiences and more recently professional development had improved. Both Anne and Spencer supported that professional development with a focus on Inquiry Based Learning represented good work within their school division. Spencer indicated the school division offered many opportunities for professional development and after attendance at these, principals were asked to note during observations whether new teaching strategies were being utilized. At present he was not aware of tracking of student learning related to the use of these teaching strategies.

Spencer acknowledged the school division was willing to develop people and “they’re very open to having people step forward and say they’re interested in administration.” Spencer supported potential administrators by encouraging attendance at Saskatchewan School Based Administrators (SSBA) Modules or the Saskatchewan Teacher’s Federation (STF) summer course entitled ‘Is the Principalship for You?’ Peter recognized, “Supports are being put in place for ones that are looking towards administration positions.” Like Spencer, he thought most principals try to provide some guidance and support.

Recruitment to formal leadership positions solicited considerable commentary. When asked about the criteria being used for selection Anne offered they might be found

on the school website within the job application forms or postings for positions. Peter also believed this would be a good place to find the criteria. However, Anne also conceded that with the present review of the protocol/policy manual “I’m thinking they’re developing that.” Spencer supported Anne’s belief that there is presently no policy outlining the criteria for the selection of principals. While Spencer and Peter emphasized shoulder tapping of strong potential applicants has been encouraged recently this appears to be done on the basis of personal opinion. Peter noted a change in the criteria over the years. He believed that although the school division would like to require potential candidates to start or complete graduate level work this may not be possible given the present application pool. Peter acknowledged, “I don’t know if they have got the interest that was out there before” but seeing repeated ads for particular principal positions had influenced his opinion.

Spencer indicated there was much talk about “how are we going to recruit and retain young administrators?” and Peter wondered what we can offer to entice young people to “take on those roles and those responsibilities?” After amalgamation Spencer found succession planning to be very hap hazard and specified that in light of the increasing number of retirements the school division needed to get a plan in place. In the past promotions in different parts of the school division have happened differently, sometimes a former position as vice-principal has been deemed necessary but in other cases principals have been appointed directly from the classroom. Although aware of inconsistencies in the past, Anne and Peter pointed out the school division has started to show more support for placing vice-principals in more schools. “They’re starting to

recognize...the importance of the vice-principalship in the schools. So they've made some direction to put those in place" was a change emphasized by Peter.

Individual comments underscored the importance of addressing the issue of transfers. Spencer pointed out for many prospective candidates location was extremely important. Many good candidates did not want to travel any distance and they definitely did not wish to relocate. For present principals Anne and Peter believed transfer to another school would be by mutual agreement. However, Peter and Spencer were aware of several examples where principals had applied for a position that would require them to relocate their family. Evidence of "more understanding and acceptance of moving to another one [school]" was pointed out by Peter.

Professional development for principals also solicited considerable input. Anne appreciated the opportunities provided at monthly administrative meetings to network with other principals who are working in grade-alike schools. Spencer and Peter felt opportunities beyond the monthly meeting should be extended to principals and within this they would like to see more self-directed time. Anne was supportive of the present work on *professional growth plans* for principals and with proposed changes. Anne expressed a need for more personal contact with her superintendent and indicated this would "help me with my leadership." Spencer, as part of his professional learning track, asked to have a formal mentor this past year. He found this particularly beneficial in giving him the opportunity to share issues, hear new perspectives on how to handle them, and in some cases to receive validation. Spencer who believed both parties in the mentorship had benefited emphasized this by saying, "I really feel that one of the best professional development opportunities anybody can take at any point in their career is to

go into somebody else's school and spend a day or two there.” His enthusiasm was evident.

Anne and Spencer agreed in recent years a wide range of professional development on data management had been provided for principals in terms of interpreting test results and then using these results to set goals for instruction in your school. Anne also valued some practical sessions focused on how to lead the use of data management with your staff and “how it ties to what you do as a principal in the school.” “Instructional leadership's an important part of being a principal. Here is sort of how you do it” was a summary statement provided by Anne.

Only a few comments were offered regarding the retention of principals. This past year the number of retirements has increased from 2 to 8 positions and this trend is expected to continue. Anne and Peter reported most of these positions will be filled from within the division. Spencer and Peter believed some principals are choosing to retire as soon as they can, due to the increased demands placed on them. For those who declare their retirement in December the opportunity to double-dip while completing the school year does exist. However of those that retire some may “take another administrative position somewhere else” was accentuated by Peter.

Using a similar format the researcher will present a case study for the remaining two school divisions within this study. Then the researcher will set forward a composite case study representing principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership, current succession-planning practices and the use of the components of the essential components of sustainable leadership within the four school divisions.



## Case Study for Urban School Division 1: Phase Two

Three principals, one female and two males, were interviewed from this urban school division. Pseudonyms chosen by these principals were Robert, Bradley and Alex. There were only elementary level students in their schools and each principal had a vice-principal. These three principals had a variety of years of experience as a principal: one over a decade, one between 5–10 years and one less than 5 years experience. All three had a primary focus on improved student achievement based on data. These principals were willing to support teachers as they came to terms with expectations to use best teaching practices based on research. All three echoed that professional development within the school division was bringing positive results and that the Professional Development Teams (pseudonym) that were put in place about a year ago were really resulting in increased progress. Self-directed professional development, as encouraged and often organized by the Principals' Professional Association<sup>3</sup>, was viewed as an important support for their own development as a leader for learning. They were seeing more collaboration between teachers and saw a growing collective responsibility for student learning.

### **Sustainable leadership.**

The three principals from this school division agreed on the importance of establishing direction. Alex emphasized the importance of consultation with the School Community Council (SCC) during this process. Similarly Bradley indicated that the SCC “can definitely have a lot to say in terms of the direction of the school and [the] school community.” Robert pointed out the principal needs to inspire a shared vision. An initial

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<sup>3</sup> This is a local professional association that all elementary and secondary principals belong to in Urban School Division 1

step in this process described by Bradley was to establish “a common set of beliefs and understanding about student learning within a school and within a community” to guide this work.

Alex emphasized that “most recent initiatives in our division have been long-term.” She believed it was the principal’s responsibility to be sure the school is meeting division priorities and expectations. Both Alex and Robert accepted the Professional Development Teams would support long-term goals being addressed. Robert asserted “the new professional learning plan that we’re going to be coming out with is very linear, in that it takes the school division’s priorities and it shows you how through that priority through your Professional Development Team and through your own professional learning plan. How it all ties together.” Alex raised the importance of addressing those who resist the changes or “students aren’t getting the kind of instruction we want.” However, keeping the long-term view in mind is a challenge due to the fact “more and more demands are being placed on the in-school administrators” was conceded by Bradley.

The three principals supported peers learning from peers. Bradley believed building “positive relationships with staff, with students, with parents and with community members” was foundational within this process. Alex emphasized ensuring there are “cohesive groups that are working together to improve practice and student learning”. She saw it as part of the principal’s job to note those who find change difficult and meet with them, support them in aligning their personal teaching goals with the school’s vision, and with division priorities and expectations. Robert believed the *Leadership Practices Inventory* could serve as a guide as principals challenge the

process, enable others to act and encourage the heart. He pointed out that helping teachers see how teaching goals, school goals and division goals all fit within the *Continuous Improvement Framework* enables teachers to feel more positive towards change.

Maintaining a cycle of positive energy requires the attention of the principal. Alex pointed out experienced staff may feel that their experience is no longer valued. She also stressed that principals need to see that legitimate concerns are addressed. Robert was aware teachers benefit by taking “time to play” often by networking or socializing. Similarly principals have this opportunity when they attend administrative meetings, committee meetings, fall seminar or events such as the Leadership Banquet or the Superannuation Banquet sponsored by the Principals’ Professional Association. Robert pointed out that those working in some contexts, such as community schools, may need more supportive opportunities in order to remain positive about the challenges they are facing in the school. Bradley stressed both teachers and principals need to “work to create a balance in your life.” Each individual needs to be prepared to work hard but also needs to be able to detach and take time to ensure proper health and fitness, some leisure, and time with family.

The three principals interviewed agreed there is more collaboration between teachers and gradually *collective responsibility* for student learning is becoming evident within their schools. Robert encapsulated this change by saying, “we’re on the road to becoming true professionals” able to set up an education plan to address individual learning needs. In his school teachers are working with the resource teacher to explore different models of *co-teaching*. Bradley believed once a critical mass was on board then you reached what Gladwell (2000) described as a *tipping point* and collaboration

becomes the norm. However, the three principals interviewed agreed there are still some teachers who are not on board with the current changes. Alex stated, “It is a necessary part of having the culture really change ... even amongst the principal group. You need everybody to be on board with what’s expected today.” The three principals asserted that the professional development offered over the past few years has had an impact on the culture in the schools. Alex recapped by saying, “professional development has improved the learning culture in the school.” Phrases like “it’s come a long way”, “there’s been a lot of growth,” and professional development has had “significant impact on ... teacher performance within the classroom” were indicative of the changes that had occurred. “I think it’s taken a number of years for the changes in assessment practices to be part of our conversation and widely accepted by teachers” was Alex’s summary.

The level of engagement by the SCC with the learning agenda in the school appeared to vary. Bradley voiced, “There is more accountability on our shoulders as principals that we have consulted parents, community members and we’ve worked with them to develop a school plan.” Bradley currently works with an SCC that is actively engaged and whose members “want to be part of the strategic planning process of the direction for the school.” Alex described consulting with the SCC while setting direction. However, Bradley acknowledged there are communities within the school division where parents are “much more willing to just trust the school staff to develop the strategic plan.” In these cases the plan developed by the staff may be shared with the SCC but “they would just agree to it.” An SCC can make “significant gains in terms of being engaged more about the learning agenda in the school” was emphasized by Bradley.

Another area of change was the Principals' Administrative Meetings. Bradley indicated in the past 3–4 years the structure and format of the meetings has become more focused on “consistent on-going instruction and learning” for principals. Through the Principals' Professional Association principals “have a lot of say in setting direction of our leadership meetings.” Principals provide input establishing what they want to learn about and then the Principals' Professional Association invites “experts in to teach us those things.” These experts are often consultants or coordinators from the school division. Robert expressed appreciation that principals in their school division were not “trapped in a top-down approach.” Alex noted, “Our role is changing to be far more the instructional leaders in addition to being the manager.” During the interviews it appeared the principals believed formal mentorship could particularly provide the support needed for the day-to-day operations of the school. However, formal mentorship may also help to address unmet professional development needs in relation to the instructional leadership part of their work.

Strategic planning for schools has changed. Today Bradley pointed out it is based on the *Continuous Improvement Framework* and it “requires commitment from all stakeholders.” Bradley emphasized that this approach contributes to sustainability. Robert underlined the importance of principals taking the time to build relationships so staff members will see “you as a person that they can trust and come to for advice” and so the larger school community can “get to the core of what we believe.” Robert highlighted that good curriculums had been developed and there were common themes such as broad areas of learning, Common Essential Learnings (CELs) and the Model of Inquiry Based Learning that helped everyone to see the big picture. Robert believed their Professional

Development Teams, which included teachers and principals from five different schools and consultants from the division, gave all an opportunity to hear more perspectives from others working at a similar grade level in different contexts and to utilize a broader range of experience. Although teachers are learning to interpret test results all three principals indicated there was room for further growth and Bradley summed this up as “a work in progress.” Robert expressed a concern that the general public may not understand education today. Bradley was the only principal who described sitting down with the superintendent to review the school data and to discuss how it informed the school planning document.

My superintendent took the time to come out and actually sit down with me and look through that data and provide me with some advice, some support, some guidance, [and] some feed-back. I think that just really speaks to them in central office knowing what is important and what the priorities should be.

This scenario addressed working across levels within the division. Alex pointed out the principal plays a critical role by saying, “You’re also that pivotal person who has to be able to meet the needs and bring together all the various stakeholders.”

All three principals described improving instruction by using data to inform decisions made by their staff members. Each of the following test results were mentioned as contributing to their data base so teachers would know where students were starting from: Canadian Abilities Test (CAT), Assessment for Learning (AFL), Professional Resources and Instruction for Mathematics Educators (PRIME) developed by Nelson Education to assess student’s math conceptual understanding in ten dimensions; and Fountas and Pinell for current reading level. The three principals pointed out this process

was strongly supported by involvement in the Professional Development Teams made up of staff members from approximately five different schools all working collaboratively to achieve their common goals. Alex enthusiastically endorsed this experience as “we just hit gold.” She also observed we are looking at new teaching strategies and becoming “more research based in looking at teacher practice.” Bradley appeared to sum up the thinking of the three principals when he clarified, “Making instructional decisions based on data and based on best practices; as opposed to just that old gut instinct that I think we used to use in the old days where we just thought we intuitively knew what the kids needed and what this kid was capable of doing.”

In Urban School Division 1, principals described cultivating leadership skills in others. All three principals acknowledged they needed to capitalize on the expertise of each individual within their building. Bradley gave the underlying reason behind this as “it’s absolutely impossible in this day and age, given the demands on our time and the demands of us in terms of the job we’re expected to do, to be an expert in all things.” Alex welcomed the leadership contributions of the people on her staff. She saw value in working with these individuals and inviting them to contribute their expertise. They in turn can help to develop ways to support the rest of the staff in achieving school goals. Alex declared, “If you have someone that you believe can further a direction that you want to go, that you look for opportunities to give them professional development in those areas to support them providing leadership.” Similarly Robert described modeling the way and assigning different duties to teachers based on his own assessment of present skills. However, Robert expressed a concern that not all principals in the division may currently choose to devote time to nurturing teacher leadership skills.

Bradley provided specifics of how the Professional Development Committee, made up of seven teachers, provided leadership within his school. They were involved in putting together the agendas for staff meetings, professional planning days and planning days. In this way they have developed “more of a sense of engagement in the strategic planning process.” This has resulted in a planning document that is not viewed by staff as top-down and leadership within the school that follows a “shared leadership model.” Bradley has also taken advantage of the expertise of individual teachers and professional development is usually led by a group rather than the principal. Bradley has found it important to provide articles by Reeves, so teachers are better informed. “We’re asking you to collaborate because we firmly believe in the research that clearly shows that it is going to have a positive impact on student learning” was knowledge Bradley provided.

Two of the principals chose to share an artifact that emphasized team work focused on the learning program over time. These principals emphasized the lasting effect of the leadership skills acquired by teachers during the process. One referred to significant growth in the role fulfilled by the SCC over time. Both principals voiced that the leadership skills developed would enhance the sustainability of the changes made and enhance the ability of the school community to address future needs. One principal’s statement, “I had an absolute ... all-star team” demonstrated passion for what had been achieved.

### **Succession-planning practices.**

Principals were supportive of the professional development offered to teachers. Alex outlined a few incidences where principals were given short notice of upcoming changes and were left feeling unable to prepare adequately. This was viewed as



counterproductive as principals could not provide informed support within their schools. Alex indicated extensive professional development at the division level has left new teachers confident they are doing the right thing. She mentioned a downside was, after being pulled out on a regular basis for professional development, some teachers see no harm in being away from their classroom for other reasons such as an extended holiday. Alex was confident teachers are having more opportunities for collaboration, they are learning a lot and they feel supported in their learning. Robert pointed out continued efforts to provide professional development for teachers related to the interpretation of data is necessary. He also emphasized principals can raise teachers' awareness of the different routes to formal leadership positions. Bradley felt teachers new to the division benefit from the teacher orientation, induction, and mentorship programs. This teacher mentorship program is "based on best practice. It's researched." He asserted that what is offered to teachers in the past ten years has been significantly different than in the past.

Recruitment to formal positions revealed several recent changes. While all three principals were sure that there was more focus on instructional leadership as a criteria for being appointed to a principalship they were not aware of a formally developed list of criteria that was currently shared with all potential applicants. Alex said "there certainly isn't anything that you would be aware of" and Robert and Bradley trusted the Leadership Advisory Committee is working on developing the criteria to match the needs of leadership in the schools for today. One pointed to how the committee is "using a research based model that would help us to be informed about the kinds of people that we would like to have in our formal leadership [positions] and then ways that we can use to encourage it through some sort of method." In addition, it was stressed, within this

model, potential candidates had to have the ability to influence the teaching and learning program. In response to the evolving changes within the criteria the application process to become a principal now includes the traditional resume and an interview with a panel but also a writing task, a data analysis task including developing a strategic plan of action, and a second interview with Human Resources. A concern was raised by Alex that the criteria needed to include not only ability as an instructional leader but also as a manager of the school. Alex's conclusion "I don't see a clear plan for that" seemed to sum up the current situation with respect to formal criteria for the position of principal within the school division.

Professional development for principals currently focuses on helping them to develop the skills to be an effective instructional leader able to interpret the data for their school and based on this analysis help the school community to develop a strategic plan that will lead towards improved student achievement. Bradley endorsed that principals "have had many, many workshops at our leadership meetings on data analysis and making sense of data and working through that." He and Robert thought most principals are now able to interpret the data for their school whereas Alex indicated further differentiated professional development related to data management is needed. Alex endorsed the Professional Development Teams saying "I think they are the best things our division has ever done!" Alex believed this approach to professional development had really helped her "to see what's happening in each class [at our school]" and she was confident teachers are now "actually targeting the kids in our school....we're actually focused on what will benefit our students." Robert commented having the Professional Development Teams for principals parallel to the Professional Development Teams for

teachers had been very helpful. In addition, Alex commented that transition meetings between departing and incoming principals could be improved in order to sustain positive developments within the school. At present these meetings are held at the discretion of the principals involved and appear to lack a consistent structure.

All three principals expressed a need for formal mentorship for principals. There was agreement that mentors needed to be supporting division priorities and “utilizing best practices and research” so they would be in a position to provide sound advice. Mentorship would be a way to help principals get on top of some of the system expectations. These mentors could help link newly appointed principals to expertise within the division and provide guidance in the area of school management. It was believed the Leadership Advisory Committee is considering formal mentorship within their general review of the research on how to best support leadership within a school division.

Principals were not aware of special efforts being made to retain principals. Alex indicated it is very hard to keep up with the demands in both the instructional leadership and the management aspects of the job. She also believed the rapid changes in the use of technology are intimidating for some principals. Both were factors that would encourage principals to exercise their right to retire at the earliest possible date.

A unique suggestion came forward during interviews to have one person in the division, a superintendent, with responsibility for leadership within the division. With the number of young people, with fewer years of experience, being appointed to the principalship we need someone “who will be able to spend a significant amount of time working closely with those people in groups [and] individually, developing professional

development for them.” This superintendent would also be able to link them to expertise within the division. In addition, this superintendent could coordinate a formal mentorship program for all principals. All three principals interviewed indicated those appointed from outside the division experience a very sharp learning curve and are in need of extra supports initially.

One of the principals interviewed raised the question of how recent changes would ultimately influence how superintendents at the division level would be selected in the future. “What kind of leadership are they going to be expected to have in their school groups?” This principal recognized sustainable leadership is also needed at the senior administration level in the school division.

Using a similar format the researcher will present a case study for the remaining school division within this study. Then the researcher will set forward a composite case study representing principals’ perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership, current succession-planning practices and the use of the components of the essential components of sustainable leadership within the four school divisions.

### **Case Study for Urban School Division 2: Phase Two**

A total of two male principals from elementary schools were willing to be interviewed from Urban School Division 2. The pseudonyms they chose were Mathias and Daniel. One had 5–6 years of experience as a principal and the other over 10 years. One principal was currently working in a large school with a vice-principal whereas the other principal in a small school with no vice-principal assigned. Both were guided by using the New Approach to Encourage Innovation (pseudonym) guidelines within their

school, although only one of the two was formally part of the project during the current school year. Both principals confirmed that division professional development for principals had contributed to their success in providing sustainable leadership within their school. Both principals appeared to be reflective educators and gave their responses only after thoughtful consideration of the questions raised.

### **Sustainable leadership.**

Very few comments were volunteered about *building vision and setting direction*. However, Daniel did allude to doing what's right for students when he stated that the New Approach to Encourage Innovation (pseudonym) was leading to more teacher collaboration which he viewed as, "I think that's to the students' benefit." He also mentioned using the first professional development day in the fall to "define some sort of direction." Within this process he emphasized the importance of aligning "the provincial *Continuous Improvement Framework* through the school division's...*Continuous Improvement Plan* to our school based *Learning Improvement Plan* to actually the teacher's *Professional Development Plan*." Daniel voiced strong support for the alignment of the four different levels.

Daniel also expressed that being proactive was important within his leadership. Although their school was not formally included in the New Approach to Encourage Innovation (pseudonym) Daniel indicated their staff was working to implement this so they would have more time to gradually get on board with the changes involved. This was encapsulated by his comment, "We've tried to already implement it so that we have those changes in place." Also in terms of the Enable Program Daniel indicated, "We got involved early. Our team recognized we were on the forefront of it." Both examples

represented a willingness to look beyond the immediate and preparing for changes that lay ahead.

Encouraging peers to learn from peers was included by both principals. Mathias believed key to this process was, “trying to make things manageable for staff and for students, advocating on their behalf, helping them in any way that you can, whether it’s supplying resources or professional development or that same mentorship that others have given you over time.” Daniel voiced that leadership comes not only from individual efforts and initiatives but you can also “draw from the efforts of the school division.” He believed professional development needs to take into consideration the learning styles of individuals but also may address either a school goal or an individual need. Daniel felt you could best avoid cancellations and postponement of sub release days for professional development by selecting dates with the highest sub availability.

Maintaining a positive energy cycle also received few comments. Daniel expressed a belief that there was an increased need to watch for overload in a small school. Daniel pointed out their staff members “have an informal understanding on our staff that we carry the load together.” Within this he believed “most people will generally do more than their portion.” Mathias emphasized a principal must be aware of what each staff member needs.

Mathias and Daniel both mentioned the New Approach to Encourage Innovation that was being phased in across the schools within their urban school division over a three year period. This project has four main goals: using inquiry based learning, increasing collaboration between teachers, emphasizing inclusionary practices and utilizing flexible grouping of students for instruction. Involvement in this project would

lead to changing the work context and culture. Whether these changes would prove to be long lived was at this stage an unknown.

Both principals considered changing the work context and culture to be somewhat dependent on the context of the school community. Mathias declared “demands of the community—demands of kids, the demands of the parents, and to some extent the demands of teachers. It takes a lot of control out of your day because you’re responding to crises that come up. And you need to respond to these things.” While Mathias felt his present assignment allowed him to have good control of his personal schedule assignments to community schools reflected a very different reality. Daniel thought that structural innovation was helping to break down teacher isolation and provide more opportunities for collaboration. Asked if the work environment is becoming more collaborative Daniel responded, “I think we’re trying to make it so. I think it’s a huge big shift for people.” However, he conceded, “I get a sense that there is more collaboration but there is a long ways to go yet.” Further discussion revealed that in a small school with no grade-alike groupings of teachers encouraging collaboration was a bigger challenge. At this time Daniel saw limited opportunity for teachers to collaborate with grade-alike teachers from other schools. Daniel speculated the ten year plan towards amalgamation of smaller school over time may address this issue. The plan is to have schools of 200–400 students.

Only two comments were focused on working together to address accountability. Mathias indicated a “drastic increase” in the number of assessment mandates, sometimes reaching a total of 4–5 per year at one grade level. This he attributed to changes in the “demands of society and government.” Daniel commented that the school division has

tried to develop stronger ties with the university Teacher Education Program in order “to help prepare teachers for the increased and changing demands of teaching.”

Both principals agreed there were increased efforts to deepening learning about instruction. Daniel pointed out that within the recent changes “there’s been talk of moving teaching from the art of teaching to the science of teaching—meaning that it’s not just an instinctive or personality based activity, but that it’s a learned skill, so we can help people to improve their teaching skills.” Mathias emphasized principals do not want their teachers working in isolation but prefer to provide opportunities where they can work collaboratively with their colleagues and benefit through sharing and mentoring. The need for “some supports in place and the opportunity for people to collaborate and ask questions” was highlighted.

Mathias indicated it is very difficult to adequately monitor instruction. At best he felt you “get little snippet snapshots and you get an impression.” Nevertheless, “I like to think that I know situations well enough. I know teachers well enough, that I can make judgments by making a five-minute pass through their classroom.” Although Mathias indicated over the years he had very few teachers on staff that he considered to be *poor* teachers he acknowledged, “But, it’s very difficult to create change in them if they don’t want to change.” In his career Mathias was only aware of one teacher being let go over poor teaching.

Developing leadership was seen as important by both of the principals interviewed. Daniel pointed out, “I think trying to disperse [later self corrected to distribute] the leadership is one of the really important ones.” He spoke of matching strengths with particular needs in the school and then drawing out the leadership from



others. There were times when Daniel, based on leadership maturity, would delegate a whole task, whereas others when he would delegate part of a task and monitor more closely. He recognized the value of the principal providing mentorship throughout the process. “I think really succession planning is just recognizing and providing opportunities for leadership in your school and encouraging the potential leaders in your building” was how Mathias summarized his thoughts.

Artifacts were shared by both principals. Mathias chose school yearbooks which he indicated showed his development over time as a principal, pointed out leaders who had helped him to become the leader he is today and highlighted the success of past students. Today Mathias has a lasting relationship with these students in these yearbooks, some of whom have contributed by adding to his collection of student artwork. Daniel provided artifacts in the form of an *events board* and a *team day*. Both were examples that fit into the category of structural innovations and Daniel commented both were focused on “team and efficiency.” Discussions revealed how the *events board* would help to reserve staff meeting time for teacher collaboration on improved instruction. The *team day* while increasing efficiency could potentially result in better inclusion practices within the school. Daniel referred to the *events board* as “it’s just part of our culture” and to the *team day* as “they tell me over and over again, they love it.” Daniel’s comments focused on taking care of day-to-day operations in an efficient way while reserving face-to-face meeting time for discussions about teaching and learning.

#### **Succession-planning practices.**

Professional development for teachers was highlighted by both principals. Mathias was aware some school divisions are experimenting with a leadership role for

teachers before being appointed to an administrative position. This would have the benefit of letting the individual know whether they liked the kind of work involved. Mathias could see advantages to doing this prior to submitting an application for a formal leadership position. Daniel was also concerned that the division “give people more information about what the next role really entails. So that they can decide whether that’s what they really want.” At present, Daniel believed some people try administration, regret their decision and wish they could return to the classroom.

Daniel emphasized new teachers receive four full days of professional development during their first year in the division. In addition, a new form has been developed to be used to evaluate their work during the first two years. This form, “it’s very focused on the teaching.” In addition Daniel pointed out the division says “our business is reading, writing and math” and it is in these three areas that the student assessments to date have focused.

Recruitment to formal leadership positions was an area that received ample comment. Mathias openly acknowledged we “need leaders from a variety of backgrounds and a variety of experiences and a variety of skills sets.” This he believed would help to address the needs of the many different schools, each with their own unique demands on the principal. However, Mathias also believed each principal will “have to develop that adaptability, that flexibility to address the needs of your community.” Within the present criteria for the position of principal “the one thing that’s sometimes a bit of a challenge for ours, is the expectation of post-graduate education and working towards your Masters.” Mathias, while he could see the graduate studies may be helpful, did not see it as mandatory in order to be a good administrator. He expanded by

saying, “For us, the short-fall is not necessarily looking at the best leadership candidates and the qualities that they possess.” Mathias would encourage placing less value on the completion of a masters degree because “there are a number of people who have their post-graduate work, who are not necessarily the best administrators they could be, or the best administrators that were available at the time they were selected.” An additional issue Mathias raised was unfortunately, “we don’t admit ...when mistakes have been made.” We need to have ways to resolve this problem of appointed principals who do not perform well within the assigned role, so students, staff, and parents are not left in a negative situation.

Mathias referred to a second concern. At the present time there are many young teachers being appointed as a principal with less than ten years of teaching. As a career administrator, they may experience “a disconnect from the classroom”, during the twenty years they will be an administrator. It will be essential that these principals “make a conscious effort” to find ways to remain connected to students and to teaching.

Daniel thought the criteria were quite well known and believed, “current administrators would be more than happy to share that kind of information with anybody who wanted more career knowledge.” Although he thought the criteria might be on the division website he was not sure exactly who would have access to this information. Daniel knew working groups on various projects often outline the responsibilities of the principal so the criteria might not all be available in one document. Daniel appeared to believe role descriptions would emphasize some of the criteria for the position of elementary school principal.

Daniel acknowledged the principal's allowance is determined by the size of the school administered and for this reason some principals want to advance to a larger school. In addition, Daniel pointed out some principals have a perception that a suburban school is a better placement. "There seems to be a culture of wanting the bigger school and the more suburban school." High school teachers who have served as a core leader or a learning leader are sometimes appointed as an administrator in an elementary school. However it is very rare to be transferred as an administrator from an elementary school to a high school. Decisions for appointment as a principal are based on "merit. Or at least on the surface it's merit." He also asserted, "I don't see seniority entering into it whatsoever." Daniel recalled that a few years ago the process of application included: a panel interview, a timed written exercise, a video-taped mock interview dealing with a critical situation, a classroom observation by a superintendent, and a written paper on a leadership topic. Each applicant would receive a total score and be ranked. Because fit with a particular school opening was considered, some high ranking candidates might not be chosen until a future year.

Mathias indicated "professional learning and professional development over time" had contributed to the principal he had become and accounted for his success in providing sustainable leadership. He specified principals could learn through the Principals' Short Course<sup>4</sup>, in-service opportunities about administration, on-the-job learning, working with mentors, and asking colleagues. However he emphasized there need to be division specific sessions that emphasize expectations, outline routines and procedures and point out those with local expertise. There also needs to be a *New*

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<sup>4</sup> This is a three day course offered by the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit of the University of Saskatchewan for those interested in learning about the role of the school principal in Saskatchewan.

*Principal* Orientation that is partially directed by other principals. Daniel appreciated the ‘*lead sessions*’ at principals’ meetings over the past two years that helped principals to learn to nurture leadership skills amongst their staff. Daniel saw this as an attempt to get everyone on staff feeling encouraged and headed in the right direction.

No comments were offered to support retaining principals within the division. Daniel did not believe any efforts were needed as “we don’t seem to have a problem in our school division because we are seen as a very desirable place to be.” He thought this may be more a rural issue. Although Daniel was not sure there were as many applicants for the position of principal as there were years ago, he still believed it was competitive at this time.

### **Composite Case Study for Four School Divisions: Phase Two**

This composite case study is based on interviews with eleven elementary school principals from four school divisions in Saskatchewan. Using the demographic information provided by survey participants the researcher selected a purposive sample from those who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. This group represented male and female principals, urban and rural school contexts within different socioeconomic areas, a variety of years of experience as principal and a variety of years assigned to the current school. The researcher would have liked to interview more female principals, K-12 principals and one more principal from Urban School Division 2. However, by comparing and contrasting the information provided by participants there were themes that emerged regarding principals’ perceptions of the components of sustainable leadership and current succession-planning practices within their school divisions.

### **Sustainable leadership.**

In two of the four school divisions principals placed a strong emphasis on assuming responsibility for guiding their staff in *setting direction*. However, in all four school divisions it was evident that school direction was expected to align with the direction of the school division and that improving student achievement was a primary goal. The major portion of these discussions was focused on how to meet division goals within the local school. While all principals may have believed *doing what's right for students* was an appropriate filter for all of their decisions, very few specifics were offered about this part of their work. This component was the underlying basis for Bradley's emphasis on the importance of being out in the school working with students and leaving less pressing matters such as emails for after students go home for the day. Although principals had an awareness of this responsibility to put student needs first, this seemed to be an unspoken assumption that guided their work much like a moral compass. Frustrations with school division mandates appeared to peak when principals were facing personal conflict in what they believed was in the best interests of students in their school context. Many principals wanted more recognition of the immediacy of basic needs; such as food, shelter, safety, and health; for students in community schools that must be met before educational needs can be considered. In light of the current mandates from the province and their school division, many principals found it very difficult to address *long-term planning*. With few exceptions it appeared that many principals defaulted to accepting that long-term plans would be set by the province and the school division.

All principals interviewed placed a high value on *peers learning from peers*. There was acceptance that principals could not be the experts at everything and teachers

must be given the opportunity for regular collaboration so they can share their expertise. In three of the four school divisions regular times for collaboration have been built into the regular timetable for all teachers. Principals in schools doing this emphasized the importance of ensuring discussion is highly focused on instruction and that facilitators with appropriate skills are essential. Although a lack of grade-alike teachers appeared to present a barrier to on-going collaboration in many schools, some principals were able to describe inroads made to address this issue. Principals reported collective responsibility for student learning is gradually growing. Principals are working to get the resisters on board with the required changes and gradually there is a sense of more professionalism within their schools. At this point very few principals have their staff working on a regular basis collaborating with teachers from other schools. Another area of slower growth appeared to be work with School Community Councils. The majority of comments described the principal informing the SCC of the direction selected by the school staff. The role of the SCC seemed to be focused on providing support for that pre-selected direction. However, there were a few principals who were involving their SCC in actively setting direction for the learning program within their school. Many principals in the study commented on the need to distinguish the SCC role as distinct from the decisions best left to professionals within the school.

Principals accepted *maintaining a positive energy cycle* as part of their role in the school. This was consistently expressed as building and maintaining positive working relationships with their staff members. Some principals also included building these working relationships with students, parents and community members. Principals voiced the importance of getting to know individual staff members, providing opportunities to

celebrate successes, taking time to socialize, establishing trust and supporting the needs of others. Principals viewed it as essential that staff members supported each other in meeting the demands of education in schools today. Principals saw it as part of their job to ensure that this happened.

*Changing the work context and culture* has progressed in recent years. All principals recognized society is placing an increasing demand on the education system that all students are successful in their learning. In all four school divisions, strategic planning is guided by the provincial *Continuous Improvement Framework*. Principals commented on an increased dialogue on student learning that is infiltrating everyday life in schools. As part of this dialogue, teachers are discussing test results and sharing ideas for improved instruction based on the data. Principals see more collaboration between teachers and fewer teachers working in isolation. As a result there is a growing professionalism within the school culture but also an increasing recognition that there is a need for further growth. At this point two of the four school divisions, with input from staff, are starting to make small adjustments in how staff is utilized within the school, how students are grouped for instruction, and how the timetable is set all in the interest of improving student learning. All principals asserted that staff members are becoming more involved in determining how to best achieve the strategic direction within the school and small inroads are appearing evident in some settings. However, in some cases the interviews appeared to indicate more limited growth than might be anticipated. *Working together to address accountability* garnered few comments. However, a few examples were offered of teachers, principals, division level staff and superintendents working across levels to improve student learning. In two school divisions principals raised the



need for sustainable leadership at the division level. They identified that just as leadership needed to evolve at the school level, it was also essential at the division level.

In the case of rural school divisions, amalgamation of school divisions has occurred concurrently with many of the current demands. This has certainly compounded the complexity of carrying out the recent mandates in these rural school divisions. Initially principals and teachers were often working with people they did not know under the direction of superintendents who may not have had previous experience in large school divisions. The new learning curve for all was exceptionally steep.

In the two urban school divisions formal structures have been put in place to encourage inquiry based learning and collaboration between teachers. In the two rural school divisions the timetable now has collaboration time built into the weekly schedule. All four school divisions have made participation mandatory, which may indicate a growing recognition that changing the work context and culture is an essential part of sustainable leadership for lasting school improvement.

*Deepening learning about instruction* was accepted by all principals as foundational to improved student achievement. In most cases principals were aware of increasing demands in the area of principals providing instructional leadership within the school. In all four school divisions principals have received professional development in the area of data management and expressed a growing ability to interpret test results. A few principals expressed an interest in working collaboratively with a colleague such as a superintendent on interpreting the test results for their school and establishing appropriate school goals based on the data. All principals acknowledged their teachers need more professional development focused on interpreting test results and learning to set

appropriate teaching goals. At this time principals supported the use of Inquiry Based Learning as a way to best achieve *deepening learning about instruction*. Principals did express some concern about one-size-fits-all within division mandates as they believed solutions had to take into account the particular school context.

*Developing leadership in others* was seen as an essential component in providing sustainable leadership. While working on this component, principals recognized teachers should be encouraged to share their expertise and in some cases to provide leadership. Examples of teacher leaders, vice-principals and professional committee leaders were highlighted. However, there appeared to be far more willingness by some individual principals to nurture leadership abilities of teachers. Only one principal mentioned an initiative within the school division to assist principals in learning to nurture teacher leadership skills. Most of the comments about formal support within the division were focused on helping those who had already expressed an interest in pursuing administration in the future. Principals all pointed out their support for *shared leadership* where teachers have an active role in decision-making. However, this appeared to be defined in different ways and seemed to receive different levels of support.

The sharing of artifacts exemplified the individual principal's concept of sustainable leadership. Individual principals chose to emphasize some components more than others but most principals supported a sense of team, shared leadership, collaboration, and shared achievement. In a few instances the sharing of artifacts accentuated a lack of congruency between espoused belief in sustainable leadership and the principal's practice. Artifacts selected also reflected a continuum in terms of the emphasis individual principals gave towards improved instruction.

### **Succession-planning practices.**

In all four school divisions, satisfaction was expressed with the current *professional development of teachers*. One rural school division had reached this point only after considerable negative experience with mandated change but had learned from this experience and moved towards building commitment. Principals felt professional development was well funded and strong support was offered by central office consultants, coaches and lead teachers. The focus for teachers new to the division was on improved instruction. In all four divisions the use of data to inform instruction was emphasized. However, it appeared to be used differently at the individual classroom level. Inquiry Based Learning was utilized in all four school divisions and the approach was described as one of building commitment to division goals. In some divisions the review of data appeared to be a continual process whereas in others more an annual event to assist with setting the school goals.

Interview questions focused on *recruitment to formal leadership positions* revealed the criteria for formal leadership positions were in flux on all four school divisions. All school divisions were experiencing an increasing number of openings for the elementary school principalship in recent years. It was agreed that abilities related to instructional leadership were definitely a main criteria but others were not so well known. Initially principals often said teachers could look on a website or ask a current administrator. However, asked to provide more detail principals conceded at the present moment this was under revision and a new list being developed. A criteria requiring work on a Master's of Education was seen as a barrier in three out of four school divisions. This requirement was sometimes waved, particularly in rural school divisions,

and where it was applied some principals felt it did not guarantee the selection of the best candidates for the job. In rural school divisions ‘transfers’ were considered a major barrier due to the unwillingness of candidates to relocate their family or to travel any distance from their home community. One rural school division was currently experiencing some success filling formal leadership positions by asking principals to shoulder-tap suitable teacher candidates and to encourage them to apply. This process appears to be based on the personal judgment of the principal rather than on formal criteria for the position. In another rural school division there is a cohort of interested potential candidates, led by a superintendent, who were learning about administration and in some cases pursuing classes together. Principals in three of the school divisions thought their division had an adequate pool of applicants while one expressed some past concerns about a shortage of applicants. Urban school divisions appeared to have more complex application procedures and one had recently included elements to assess instructional leadership abilities.

Principals in rural school divisions expressed less satisfaction with *professional development for principals* than principals from urban school divisions. They wanted more self-selected professional development directed by their own principals’ group. At present, the rural division opportunities for principals were limited to the monthly administrative meetings and the annual retreat with the agendas entirely set by those in central office. In one case it was anticipated there would be changes made in the fall to address principal concerns. Principals from all four school divisions recognized opportunities for collaboration helped them as they worked to meet the demands of their job as principal. The opportunities for this provided within the monthly meetings was

appreciated but principals would like to have more opportunities to network with other principals. In all cases principals valued the opportunity to informally network with their colleagues and believed more formalized mentorships for both newly assigned and experienced principals would be beneficial. Closely connected was a frequent request for principals to have more input to self-directed professional development. In one urban school divisions principals felt highly supported in their work whereas those from the other three divisions felt their school divisions did not offer the desired level of support. It appeared that many worked in isolation in their school and relied on a few close colleagues to provide personal support.

The topic of *retention of principals* received little attention. In some school divisions principals had the opportunity to double dip if they declared their intentions by December 1. This was seen as encouraging the principal to complete the academic year. However, principals in all four school divisions believed there was no current interest in principals continuing after they were eligible to retire. Across the four school divisions principals commented on a lack of validation, rewards or recognition within their school division for their work as a principal. However, several principals commented that they or colleagues they knew intended to seek employment with a different school division after they complete their 30 years in their current school division. In some cases principals felt they would have a better chance to move into a senior administrative position with a different school division. A problem with retention of principals was raised in several school divisions. This problem centered on the newly appointed principal who found the role was very different than they had anticipated or who found their personal performance fell far short of division expectations. Principals were

concerned about a lack of ways to address either situation. They wanted potential candidates to be better informed prior to making an application and they expressed a need for a graceful way for appointed principals to choose to step down. In an era of school improvement, principals believed a solution to this problem should be developed.

### **Summary of the Results for Phase Two**

Phase two included eleven interviews conducted in four school divisions in Saskatchewan. The semi-structured interview protocol was refined on the basis of the survey results and the information provided by the interpretive panels. This assisted the researcher in probing for more information pertaining to the study during the interviews.

Results of the interviews highlighted several common themes where components of sustainable leadership were being addressed in all four school divisions. There was also evidence of concerns unique to a particular school division or in some cases common to several school divisions. Principals, with their knowledge of the local setting, were able to explain some of the unique situations that contributed to their perception of how they provided sustainable leadership within their school or of the succession-planning practices within their school division.

In all four school divisions principals are applying their current knowledge as they provide sustainable leadership within their own school. Principals reported finding some of the components contribute more to their successful leadership than others. All principals spoke of the importance of aligning school goals with the division goals. Some principals described placing their emphasis on how to carry out a division goal rather than on what goal their school should pursue. *Doing what's right for students* seemed to

be an assumed filter used by principals in their decision making. A few principals expressed a concern about one-size-fits-all mandates that they believed did not address the needs of their students. Most principals readily admitted addressing current mandates took priority over concerning themselves with long-term planning.

Principals highly valued having teachers work collaboratively and share their subject expertise. Data management was a tool used in all four school divisions as principals worked with their staff to deepen learning about instruction. Most principals wanted more professional development for teachers in the area of interpreting test results and establishing appropriate learning goals based on the data. It was recognized by principals in this study that there is a growing collective professionalism evident in schools. However, to date only limited networking between schools has occurred and school community councils are often restricted to playing a supportive role. Within the process of providing sustainable leadership principals recognized the important of *maintaining a positive energy cycle* and for this reason placed a strong emphasis on building strong working relationships with their staff members.

Some areas of slower progress in providing sustainable leadership were also evident. *Changing the work context and culture* was taking considerable time and recent amalgamation of rural school divisions had added to the complexity. Principals alleged that teacher dialogue regarding student learning was increasing both in quantity and depth. While fewer teachers were choosing to work in isolation there were still some resisters in schools. The appearance of structural changes supported by teachers was being noted in some settings: assigning staff to improve student learning, grouping of

students in flexible ways to enhance learning, and timetabling for collaboration between teachers within the regular school schedule.

Few comments were offered with respect to *working together to address accountability*. In the urban school divisions, formal structures were being introduced to encourage Inquiry Based Learning. In rural school divisions regular collaboration time was built into the regular weekly schedule. The researcher detected a strong we/they relationship described by participants that existed between principals and central office administrators. The need for sustainable leadership at the division level was acknowledged by several principals and very few described experiences beyond the monthly principals' meeting that involved vertical relationships in their school division.

Principals valued capturing existing leadership skills to be used for the benefit of the school. Nonetheless, most leadership development was focused on those teachers who had expressed an interest in becoming administrators. These potential administrative candidates were offered professional development opportunities at the division level. Most principals felt they needed some help in learning to facilitate leadership skill development with teachers on their staff.

Principals described succession-planning practices presently used in their school divisions. In general principals were very pleased with the professional development offered to teachers. Inquiry Based Learning was being used in all four school divisions to improve student learning. Principals appreciated the opportunities they as principals had been offered to learn about data management and to network with other principals. In some school divisions they have requested more input regarding the professional development they will be offered in the future.



The interviews also revealed ways to enhance succession-planning practices to further support sustainable leadership for school improvement. Principals indicated the criteria for formal leadership positions are presently being updated to better reflect the current emphasis on principals serving as instructional leaders. For some applicants for the position of elementary school principal expectations to take graduate level classes, to accept a transfer that involves moving their family to a new community, and to travel longer distances to work were seen as barriers. Principals in three of the four school divisions felt they are not receiving adequate support for the complex job they are expected to do. In recent years the emphasis on professional development for principals on instructional leadership has often left little time to support effective day-to-day operations of the school. A solution principals proposed was to have all principals involved in formal mentorships.

To date principals believed little effort was being made to retain existing principals. In all four school divisions a very high percentage of principals felt that validation, rewards, or recognition was inadequate to encourage a principal to continue their work. Those who were eligible to retire often did so intending to apply for work in a different school division. Principals indicated currently school divisions do not adequately resolve situations where principals receive poor performance reviews or where newly assigned principals regret taking on their new role. Further specifics for improvement in understanding the essential components of sustainable leadership and having supportive succession-planning practices in place will be set out in chapter six.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Restatement of the Problem**

Elementary principals are working in a global environment subject to rapid change. Adaptability to change by educators has become a prerequisite for success in schools where parents are demanding improved student achievement for all students. Living in an information society there is only a limited future for students who do not acquire an education. As principals lead in their schools, it is part of their job to encourage teachers to use best practices and to engage in the quest for on-going school improvement. Educational systems are supporting data management to guide improving instruction and to meet the external accountability demands currently placed on schools.

This is an environment where continuity in a positive direction is not only anticipated but expected. In order for principals be successful in their role, as the formal leader of the school, and to provide for the continued increased academic achievement of their students it is important to know where principals should direct their attention. For this reason this study set out to address two questions:

1. What are principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship?
  - a. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on school context?
  - b. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's years of administrative experience?

- c. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's tenure as principal of this school?
  - d. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's gender?
2. What are principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship?
- a. In light of principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement what are the implications for succession planning?

After a brief summary of methodology the answers to the above two main research questions will be set out in this chapter under the headings: Main Findings: Sustainable Leadership and Main Findings: Succession-Planning Practices. Within each, significant differences based on context, principal's years of experience as principal, principal's tenure in current school and gender will also be outlined for the reader.

## **Summary**

### **Methodology.**

An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was selected to address the two research questions. The researcher believed a more complete answer to the two research questions could be provided by including both quantitative and qualitative data.

Phase one of this study was a survey of elementary school principals from four school divisions. The researcher developed a survey based on the research literature. This research literature provided a partially developed *a priori* theory of sustainable leadership and succession-planning practices. The sites selected for the research included

two urban school divisions and two rural school divisions from Saskatchewan. The rural school divisions were randomly selected from a list of all school divisions in the central region of Saskatchewan. All principals from these four school divisions were invited to participate in an electronic survey regarding their perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership and of current succession-planning practices. The survey utilized the *Web Survey Tool* made available through the University of Saskatchewan and a total of fifty participants completed the survey. SPSS was used to help analyze the quantitative survey data. After the researcher compiled an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data an interpretive panel from each school division met to discuss the results and to offer further insights. By listening to participants the researcher became aware of some of the factors operating within the local context that may have affected how principals responded to the survey. At the end of phase one, the semi-structured interview protocol was refined and a purposive sample of participants for phase two was selected.

Phase two included conducting up to three interviews with principals from each of the four school divisions. These interviews, which took approximately an hour each, provided the researcher with information regarding the essential components that the individual principal believed had contributed to their success in providing sustainable leadership within their school. Each individual was also asked to comment on the succession-planning practices within their school division. Principals were encouraged to share several artifacts that they felt best represented their sustainable leadership. Following each interview a transcript of the interview was typed and a copy provided to the participant. Principals could request any changes they wished prior to signing a

release of the interview transcript. After the transcript releases were authorized, the transcripts were coded using the categories provided in the research literature. This assisted the researcher in compiling a case study for each school division and a composite case study for the four school divisions.

The researcher analyzed all the data to determine the main findings of the study. An integration of quantitative data and qualitative data was fostered through the use of joint display (See Appendix J). The researcher considered convergent and divergent data from both phases of the study. These charts contain some of the data for the main findings presented in the following sections. Also included is an analysis of the significant differences found at the end of each section of main findings that follow.

### **Main Findings: Sustainable Leadership.**

Although principals may have been aware of all of the components of sustainable leadership as set out in the research literature, they believed depending on the context there would be a need to utilize some more than others. They saw it as part of their job to assess the current level of development with the school and based on that assessment to determine which components of sustainable leadership could be used most effectively. Part of the explanation principals provided was that depending on the level of development within the school, some of the elements would be well established and only require maintenance support. It was also clarified that in some contexts, such as community schools, principals needed to firmly establish direction and the immediacy of meeting physical needs and health and safety needs often must take priority over efforts aimed at improving academic achievement. However, there were findings from the study with respect to the essential components of sustainable leadership.

***Maintaining a cycle of positive energy.***

More than any other component principals stressed that positive working relationships with members of the school staff were essential for sustainable leadership to be possible. If student learning was to improve, principals needed teachers to work on providing instruction to better meet the learning needs of their students. Principals viewed positive working relationships as a critical prerequisite to meeting these school goals. In order to lead teachers in facing the complex challenges ahead principals recognized they must maintain their passion for leadership. They also recognized it was important to have emotional understanding of others and know when it is most effective to use pressure or support. Principal support for establishing positive working relationships at the school level was apparent within the data collected at all phases of the research.

***Encouraging peers to learn from peers.***

Principals recognized the expectations of those fulfilling the role of the elementary school principal have changed enormously in recent years. They also acknowledged principals are now held accountable for improved student achievement. All principals supported *peers learning from peers* as an essential way to provide sustainable leadership in schools. They wanted to capture the expertise of all staff members and have them share their knowledge. Data collected within both phases of the study supported this finding.

***Deepening learning about instruction.***

Participants agreed this was an essential component of providing sustainable leadership. However, some principals claimed it was an integral part of everything they

do while providing leadership for the school; others limited this aspect to one portion of their work which they identified as the school improvement plan.

Data management was a tool used in all four school divisions to guide learning about ways to improve student learning. The main goal was to increase teacher knowledge about student learning so teachers could adjust instruction to better meet student learning needs. Principals from the four school divisions within the study described attaining different levels of success with using data to deepen learning about instruction. Most principals expressed a need for teachers to have more professional development focused on interpreting test results. There are implications for succession-planning directly related to this component.

***Developing leadership in others.***

Participants in the study supported having teachers share their expertise about instruction. Some principals indicated an important aspect of their job is to ascertain the strengths individual teachers bring to the table and to support them in sharing this expertise with other teachers. A few also believed knowing the leadership maturity of each individual teacher on your staff would help you to delegate responsibilities more appropriately and to provide the level of support needed by each teacher.

Nurturing teacher leadership abilities was an area receiving limited support. Very few principals mentioned ways they help teachers to develop leadership skills. Comments were made more in the vein of determining the strengths teachers already possessed. Only in one school division was professional development for principals, focused on nurturing teacher leadership skills, mentioned. Existing efforts on development of leadership skills appeared to focus almost exclusively on working with those teachers

who had expressed an interest in administration. In this respect, opportunities were offered at the division level. The area of *developing leadership in others* has implications for succession-planning practices.

***Changing the work context and culture.***

Principals across the study were aware changes were needed. They were particularly conscious of setting up opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Within all four school divisions formal structures have been put in place to ensure this occurs and principals described their work to support this. A common concern was expressed that getting teachers to collaborate in the absence of other grade-alike teachers was a barrier for most. In changing the work context and culture, it appeared that different levels of success were being attained. It is also interesting that principals ranked their use of the component of *changing the work context and culture* the lowest of all of the components of sustainable leadership.

Collective professionalism, although moving in a positive direction, remained a broken front. Principals acknowledged not all teachers were on board with expectations to follow best teaching practices and dealing with resistors was still a concern for principals. Principals were willing to devote considerable time to working with resistors and helping them to understand what changes would be necessary. However, there was some frustration expressed about lack of division support for principals when teachers refused to change. This is an area that may require some up-dating of succession-planning practices.



***Working together to address accountability.***

Principals viewed *principal leadership as critical* as they guided staff in a way that modeled enthusiasm for attaining the school goals, built commitment to the school's vision, and maintained a belief that progress is possible. Nevertheless, few principals mentioned working with others beyond their schools. No principal indicated serving on a provincial committee or working directly with government representatives. A few principals described working with senior administrators from their school division on their own leadership, on a leadership committee, or on setting appropriate school goals based on data. All principals appeared to value the opportunity to network with other principals who are facing similar issues in their school. However, for most this was limited to the monthly administration meeting.

In a limited number of cases, there were principals supporting collaborative efforts carried out between teachers in different schools. These principals saw this as providing grade-alike opportunities for teachers while also providing a broader set of perspectives for teacher consideration. Conversely, in a few cases, principals expressed when an opportunity to work with teachers from other schools was proposed teachers viewed this negatively.

***Doing what's right for students.***

On the surveys principals claimed they used this component more than any other component of sustainable leadership. However, repeatedly little comment was offered about this component. Noticing this void the researcher probed for more information.

Participants, when challenged, pointed out *doing what's right for students* was a filter that principals use in all decision making. It appeared to be an assumption that good

principals would always do this. A member of the Rural School Division 1 encapsulated this by saying, “I think that would be the centre for any of us.” However, no one acknowledged a set of standards to use in this area of their work and it appeared to be left up to the individual principal’s judgment. Fine-tuning succession planning practices to ensure leadership potential in this area may need careful consideration.

***Taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals.***

The researcher noted few comments were made about long-term goals for an individual school. Principals seemed far more likely to default to the current main goals established by the division. One participant captured this thinking by indicating predominantly the division determines what the school goals are to include and the school determines how to meet those goals. A few principals mentioned setting a few additional goals, outside the school division goals, aimed at addressing local needs. However, principals almost unanimously emphasized the importance of close alignment between province, division, and school goals.

A major consensus by all principals was that little time remained after meeting the provincial and division mandates for change. This may be a logical development of a more globalized world where change is rapid paced. School divisions may need to provide professional development to principals focused on long-term goals in relation to the current school goals. The survey results indicating increased test scores are the primary aim of school improvement may indicate a serious misunderstanding in this area. Similarly, the survey result of keeping the focus always on your own students may not bode well for sustainable leadership.

### ***Significant differences.***

A Kruskal Wallis Test (See Appendix K) indicated some significant differences among and between the four school divisions regarding knowledge of components of sustainable leadership. Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found in the responses to *principals need to take time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement* ( $H(3) = 17.734, p = .000$ ) ; *it is important to support student learning that requires higher order thinking skills* ( $H(3) = 10.233, p = .017$ ); *an important part of the principal's work is to align the vision of the school with the vision of the school division* ( $H(3) = 9.850, p = .020$ ) ; *total collective leadership within the school has more impact on student learning than formal leadership alone* ( $H(3) = 9.477, p = .024$ ); and *principals must maintain a strong emphasis on collaboration with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, and community members* ( $H(3) = 8.184, p = .042$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found in response to *principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school* ( $H(3) = 7.183, p = .066$ ); *principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers* ( $H(3) = 6.911, p = .075$ ); and *the principal must ensure that regular monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of student achievement is conducted* ( $H(3) = 6.751, p = .081$ ).

A Kruskal Wallis Test indicated other significant differences based on context. School level resulted in significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in response to *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results* ( $H(3) = 12.881, p = .005$ ) and marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) for *it takes time for teachers to develop the capacity to make necessary instructional changes* ( $H(3) = 7.343, p = .062$ ). Based on socioeconomic status of the school community significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were

found in response to *principals must carefully consider the leadership maturity of each teacher* ( $H(2) = 7.044, p = .030$ ) and *informed judgments need to be the basis of staff decisions about instruction* ( $H(2) = 6.191, p = .045$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found in response to *principals must ensure that adequate supports, such as professional development, teaching materials, and planning time, are provided* ( $H(2) = 4.800, p = .091$ ) and *depending on the context of the school, principals may need to carry out leadership tasks differently* ( $H(2) = 4.779, p = .092$ ). Community populations also resulted in significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) for *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results* ( $H(2) = 7.620, p = .022$ ) and *principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement* ( $H(2) = 10.748, p = .005$ ). In addition marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found in the responses to *shared leadership includes matching the needs of the school with the expertise of those involved* ( $H(2) = 5.837, p = .054$ ), *it takes time for teachers to develop the capacity to make necessary institutional changes* ( $H(2) = 5.753, p = .056$ ) and *principals with emotional understanding of self and others are more able to support teachers* ( $H(2) = 4.628, p = .099$ ).

Years of experience as a principal resulted in significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) in the responses to *the primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results* ( $H(3) = 12.881, p = .005$ ). This was similar to years of tenure at the current school that resulted in significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) to *principals must avoid 'one size fits all' models* ( $H(3) = 10.301, p = .016$ ); *depending on the context of the school, principals may need to carry out leadership tasks differently* ( $H(3) = 9.961, p = .019$ ); and *professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates* ( $H(3)$

= 8.617,  $p = .035$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were evident in responses to *the principal needs to ensure that regular monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of student achievement is conducted* ( $H(3) = 7.234, p = .065$ ).

Gender resulted in a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) for *teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization* ( $H(1) = 4.284, p = .038$ ). Also marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found in responses to *low socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement* ( $H(1) = 3.737, p = .053$ ), *principals must have the ability to judge when it is best to raise expectations or to provide support for staff* ( $H(1) = 3.337, p = .068$ ), and *principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers* ( $H(1) = 2.765, p = .096$ ). Gender differences were found to be significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the use of the components of sustainable leadership. Female principals indicated a significantly higher use of the component of *encouraging peers to learn from peers* ( $H(1) = 7.826, p = .005$ ) whereas male principals reported a significantly higher level of use of *maintaining a cycle of positive energy* ( $H(1) = 4.953, p = .026$ ). Another significant difference regarding the use of the components of sustainable leadership was also found. Principals in K–8 schools reported using *encouraging peers to learn from peers* ( $H(2) = 8.749, p = .013$ ) significantly more often than principals with both elementary and secondary students.

Although these differences were significant or marginally significant these results need to be interpreted with caution. Larger studies need to be conducted to see if these differences are evident in larger samples of principals from schools with elementary level students. Is so, then decisions will need to be made to see which differences can lead to

practical applications that will help principals to provide sustainable leadership for improved student achievement.

### **Main Findings: Succession-Planning Practices.**

During both phases of this study principals described current succession-planning practices within their school division. Findings are presented in the following four sections.

#### ***Professional development for teachers.***

Principals expressed satisfaction with professional development offered to teachers. Collectively they praised efforts to provide strong professional development for newly assigned teachers in the four school divisions. Nonetheless, principals would like to see more professional development for teachers in the area of interpreting test results and setting classroom goals based on the data.

#### ***Recruitment to formal leadership positions.***

This aspect of succession-planning practices presented a quandary for many of the principals involved in the study. The criteria for the formal position of principal were in a state of flux. No one seemed too sure on exactly what basis appointments were being made. Although all four school divisions supported completion of post-graduate level studies prior to appointment to the position of principal this criteria was often waived. Nevertheless, for those expressing an interest in becoming a principal, these studies were recommended.

Due to the increased number of principals reaching retirement age principals from all four school divisions believed there were now an increasing number of openings for

newly appointed principals. Instructional leadership skills were seen as gaining in importance. However, concern was expressed that leadership abilities pertaining to the day-to-day operations of the school were being ignored. Although acknowledged as good candidates for the positions, principals believed newly appointed principals often had limited teaching experience and inadequate or even non-existent administrative experience. This meant a very steep learning curve for these principals and a need for offering more support during the early years as a principal.

***Professional development for principals.***

Principals strongly supported the opportunity for their own members to select and direct some of their professional development. This appeared to originate from principals knowing what would be most useful to them. Some pointed out that when current superintendents or directors were principals the demands of the job were quite different. Almost unanimously, principals supported the need for formal mentorship for all principals. Mentorship which afforded opportunities for principals to benefit from the knowledge of other principals was highly valued. Within these mentorship situations principals were seeking the three types of knowledge described by Imber (1995): theoretical knowledge, technical knowledge and career knowledge.

Principals from the rural school divisions expressed that the recent amalgamation to larger school divisions did compound the complexity of professional development for principals. It has taken time to develop trusting relationships between the members of the new administration groups and few had previous experience working in a larger school division. Principals pointed out that this was also apparent for the leaders working at the

division level. Initial growing pains were acknowledged and attention to addressing these issues has been required in both rural school divisions.

***Retention of school principals.***

Principals in this study specified recognition or rewards were an area where improvement was warranted. In response to the survey 82% were not able to express agreement with the statement *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work*. Although a few principals said superintendents were supportive, many principals believed words of encouragement for a job well done were seldom offered by senior administrators from central office. In one school division there was even concern expressed that singling someone out for positive support would only lead to bad feelings from others not so recognized. In rural school divisions, principals expressed very limited contact with other principals beyond the monthly administrator's meeting. In addition 82% of participants believed teachers view the principal's role in a negative way. Data from both phases of the study revealed that many principals felt unsupported and undervalued.

Transfer processes created feelings of frustration for principals. Intentions forms were used in all four school divisions but many principals were not sure these had much bearing on principal transfers. In some school divisions no in-person discussion occurred around such moves from one school to another. Once a transfer was announced limited transition meetings between in-coming and out-going principals occurred. The root of the problem appeared to be that principals did not really believe they had a voice in the transfer process.



Once principals reach retirement age, other principals expected them to take the first opportunity to retire. In some of the school divisions, principals who declared their intentions by December 1 are able to double-dip until the end of the academic year. However, it was generally agreed there would be no other encouragement to continue as principal within the school division. Although this was accepted as standard practice, several of the principals interviewed indicated, of those who do retire, it is common for them to go and work in a different school division. For school divisions facing an increasing demand for newly appointed principals there are implications for succession planning that may help them to retain current experienced principals.

***Significant differences.***

A Kruskal Wallis Test found significant differences with respect to current succession planning practices (See Appendix K). Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were found between school divisions in responses to *the school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship* ( $H(3) = 11.433, p = .010$ ), *teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction* ( $H(3) = 10.478, p = .015$ ), *principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure changes are well established* ( $H(3) = 8.808, p = .032$ ) and *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands* ( $H(3) = 8.126, p = .043$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) were found in responses to *in our school division a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career* ( $H(3) = 6.641, p = .084$ ) and *nurturing the long-term potential of employees is valued in your school division* ( $H(3) = 6.511, p = .089$ ).

No significant differences based on school level were found related to succession-planning practices. The only significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) by socioeconomic status of the school community was in response to *principals in the school division are expected to discuss career plans with each teacher on a regular basis (at least annually)* ( $H(2) = 7.404$ ,  $p = .025$ ). Community population resulted in a significant difference in responses to *principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operation of the school* ( $H(2) = 6.086$ ,  $p = .048$ ).

Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) based on years of experience as a principal were evident in responses to *a principal is often left alone 'to just do the job' without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills* ( $H(3) = 7.878$ ,  $p = .049$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ), based on principal's years at the current school, were also evident in response to *the rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work* ( $H(3) = 7.190$ ,  $p = .066$ ).

Significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) based on gender were found in responses to *many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands* ( $H(1) = 4.448$ ,  $p = .035$ ). Marginally significant differences ( $p < .10$ ) based on gender were also found with respect to *principals remain in the same school for five or more years to ensure changes are well established* ( $H(1) = 2.867$ ,  $p = .090$ ).

These results regarding succession-planning practices, although significant and marginally significant, are based on a small study that included a sample of fifty participants. Therefore, these results must be interpreted with caution. In the future larger studies could be utilized to see if these results can be replicated. If significant

results are found, then these can be examined to determine which are of practical value. Selected significant findings may help to improve succession-planning practices to be more supportive of sustainable leadership.

### **Discussion of Findings in Comparison to the Literature Review for this Study**

Language is a source of difference between researchers and practitioners. Terms set out in the research literature are not always the terms that principals use. For this reason the researcher often had to make judgments while aligning the principal's comments with the appropriate categories from the research. It must also be acknowledged that there is overlap between the different components of sustainable leadership.

The strongest alignment between the research literature and principal practice in the area of sustainable leadership was evident in the area of *understanding and developing people*. Principals broadly supported the importance of *encouraging peers to learn from* peers. They also realized the importance of knowing when it was best to use pressure or support as they worked diligently while *maintaining a cycle of positive energy*.

*Deepening learning about instruction* as set out in the research literature was considered a primary focus by all principals. Each principal knew they were responsible to see teachers focused on improving student achievement. In this quest, data management was a tool used in all four school divisions. *Developing leadership in others*, an essential component of sustainable leadership within the research literature, was valued by principals in the study. Principals emphasized seeking appropriate

professional development opportunities for teachers who could offer instructional expertise. However, more frequently, a strong emphasis was placed on having those interested in administration self declare and then these teachers would be offered extra professional development opportunities at the system level.

*Redesigning the organization* is emphasized in the research literature. This research literature supports collaboration between teachers from across the school division as an essential aspect of school improvement. Principals are well versed that there need to be changes in how teachers conduct their work in schools and to this end they very actively support collaboration. Principals in all school divisions in the study described participating in system-wide initiatives to promote this collaboration within schools. The school divisions involved in this study have recently introduced structural innovations to promote collaboration between schools. *Working together to address accountability* is most evident within the local school. At present, innovation to develop networks for teachers to work with teachers from other schools, are at the development stage.

The research literature on sustainable leadership for school improvement emphasized the importance of *building vision and setting direction*. Principals in this study did agree that a direction needed to be established within the school. This direction had to be clearly aligned with division goals. *Taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals* was often an area that was to a large degree ignored. Principals admitted to having very limited time to address long-term goals within their work. The prevailing attitude seemed to be to defer to the division goals that were already aligned with provincial goals. However, this sometimes led to difficulties where

this process became dysfunctional. This seemed most obvious in community schools where efforts to meet physical needs and health and safety needs were often most immediate whereas at the division level only improved student achievement goals were deemed to be appropriate. Directing more attention to this component may be necessary.

*Grow your own leaders*, as established in the research literature on succession planning has been adopted by all four school divisions within the study. In the rural school divisions where shoulder tapping was actively encouraged, this appeared to be the primary motive. However, with no formal criteria guiding the process there are issues to be addressed within the four school divisions. The urban school divisions' application process for administrative positions is starting to screen for data management skills, used within instructional leadership, whereas this did not appear evident in the rural school divisions. For all four school divisions this dimension of school leadership is taking on increased importance and effective screening measures will need to be developed and refined.

Using effective succession-planning practices can enhance the provision of sustainable leadership for school improvement. Professional development of all teachers, including their leadership abilities is important. Ensuring all teachers are aware of the formal leadership selection practices within the school division may help to increase the pool of candidates. Professional development for principals in all aspects of leadership is essential for the smooth day-to-day operations that are conducive to both student and adult learning. Retention of principals is crucial when school divisions face an anticipated rapid retirement rate. Supportive succession-planning practices will help the school divisions to retain their experienced principals for a longer period of time.

Principals, who feel supported and valued, will be more willing to work on the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement.

### **Other Interesting Findings**

During the course of this exploratory study several interesting findings emerged. As this is a small study, these findings would need to be substantiated in future research. However, each may provide an additional aspect worthy of consideration when trying to provide for sustainable leadership and supportive succession-planning practices.

It was particularly interesting to the researcher that in three school divisions some of the participants looked at sustainable leadership in terms of the supports needed at the system level. A few principals voiced an opinion that the type of leadership provided at the senior administration level would need to change to more fully support sustainable leadership. It was acknowledged that many of the current superintendents had worked in schools under a very different model. There was also some speculation as to how leadership at the senior administrative level would evolve in upcoming years.

While conducting this study it became apparent to the researcher that the amalgamation of school divisions had a major impact on rural school divisions. Participants from both Rural School Division 1 and Rural School Division 2 indicated they had experienced many difficulties adapting to working within a larger school division. Those from Rural School Division 2 appeared to have the most difficulty but felt their school division was now heading in a positive direction. There were repeated comments about the time required to establish working relationships with a larger number

of colleagues and the lack of experience working in a larger school division at all levels: teacher, principal, superintendent, and director.

This study also pointed out differences in administrative experience for principals in the four school divisions in the study. Experience as a vice-principal prior to becoming a principal indicated an interesting trend. In Rural School Division 1, 78% of participants and from Rural School Division 2, 77% of participants had less than 6 years experience as a vice principal. In Urban School Division 1, 53% and from Urban School Division 2, 75% had less than six year of experience as a vice principal. Further 22% from Rural School Division 1 and 38% from Rural School Division 2 had less than one year of experience as a vice principal. The researcher wondered how years of experience as a vice principal impacted their knowledge and use of the components of sustainable leadership as a current principal. In addition, of the participants in this study, 44% from Rural School Division 1, 36% from Rural School Division 2, 38% from Urban School Division 2, and 63 % from Urban School Division 1 had more than five years of experience as principal. If these figures are representative, when a school division formulates a succession plan it may be important to take this kind of information into consideration.

Principals in all school divisions expressed concern about the steep learning curve for newly appointed colleagues. Participants indicated that candidates were being appointed with fewer years of teaching experience and with a limited number of years of administrative experience as a vice principal. Many principals emphasized that newly assigned principals could benefit from mentorship. However, principals indicated establishing a strong mentorship program would also assist all principals. It was widely

acknowledged that asking your superintendent for help infringed on their time but there may also be other principals with more current information to share with you. Principals pointed out there were many aspects related to the day-to-day operation of the school, in addition to instructional leadership, where this would be most helpful.

An interesting problem surfaced during the study. There was a concern that people who are appointed to the principalship and find themselves ill-suited to their new role currently have no graceful way to personally decide to step down. This was viewed by principals as a serious issue resulting in some principals continuing to lead a school but perhaps in a less than stellar manner. A few individuals also expressed a need to demote principals who had very poor performance reviews. Currently this was seen as an extremely rare occurrence and that more rigorous standards should be applied. In both cases principals believed a lack of a solution would result in reduced student learning in schools.

The use of interpretive panels to assist the researcher with the interpretation of the results of the survey in phase one appeared to be very beneficial. Members of the panels brought their knowledge of local school division factors to bear on the interpretation. This was particularly evident in terms of the recent effects of rural school division amalgamation. The panels were also very knowledgeable regarding the impact of the increasing number of principals choosing to retire in recent years. The researcher believed the interpretive panels were able to effectively highlight the level of frustration that principals were feeling as they faced ongoing, fast-paced, adaptive challenges within their schools. Other researchers may want to also make use of interpretive panels as a method to strengthen participant voice.



### **Implications for Sustainable Leadership**

The present-day demand on schools to improve student achievement is very apparent in elementary schools. Principals, as the formal leaders of the schools, must have a good understanding of the complex task of providing sustainable leadership. The four school divisions who participated in this study can use the findings to improve sustainable leadership as provided by elementary school principals within their school divisions. They could choose to have all principals in their school division respond to selected questions from the survey where they want to focus their improvement efforts.

The data indicates that it will be important to ensure that principals understand it is the interaction between the essential components of sustainable leadership that lead to school improvement. To ignore any one of the essential components could lead to reduced student learning. That said, the context of the local school will need to be taken into consideration by the individual principal as they make their plans to provide sustainable leadership for school improvement.

School divisions can continue to support areas where principals' perceptions within this study indicated a high level of knowledge. These would include: maintaining a cycle of positive energy, encouraging peers to learn from peers, and deepening learning about instruction. These are areas where progress is evident but continued development possible and desirable.

Based on the data collected, developing leadership in others is an area where efforts need to be enhanced in all four participating school divisions. In most settings efforts to date have focused on teachers who have declared an interest in administration. With the complexity of adaptive changes faced in schools it is important to utilize the

expertise of all teachers. Offering principals professional development in how to nurture leadership skills could enhance the number of potential leaders being developed for informal shared leadership positions within the school division. It could also instill confidence in teachers who may later declare an interest in applying for formal leadership positions.

Some changes in work context and culture have already occurred within the four school divisions. Nonetheless, principals ranked their use of this component as lower than all other essential components. Although increased teacher collaboration was acknowledged across all schools, in smaller schools principals identified a lack of grade-alike teachers frequently presented a barrier. There may be ways for those working at the division level to model how cross-grade groups of teachers can work to better inform teaching practice. With this barrier in mind, school divisions also need to promote opportunities for teachers to meet with teachers from other schools. The agendas for these meetings need to be tightly focused on student learning.

Past research indicated holding teachers to a high standard of collective professionalism, where teachers accept responsibility for student learning is foundational to school improvement. Part of this responsibility is sharing individual professional knowledge with other teachers. Modeling this may also help to counter the resistance that some teachers still present. In addition, school divisions need to more seriously address the issue of teachers who resist change and who do not adjust their teaching practice in light of current research. Ignoring this issue, sometimes by transferring the teacher to a different school, has been identified by principals in this study as having serious negative consequences for school improvement.

Participants in this study indicated working together to address accountability is presently largely limited to working within an individual school. In contrast, previous research has suggested the importance of building both lateral and vertical relationships within the school division so educators can develop a better sense of interdependence. Teachers, principals, parents, students, central office consultants and administrators, and government representatives working together can lead to far more productive and coordinated efforts to improve student learning. It is through working with others, from different levels within the educational system, that a shared agenda becomes possible. Some of the recent innovations described by participants, point toward initial steps to address this essential component of sustainable leadership.

A starting point for many school divisions would be to provide principals with more opportunities to network with other principals. Formal mentorships could be fostered to fill a variety of needs for both new and experienced principals. It is also imperative that superintendents model and provide sustainable leadership for principals. Within this, it is essential that superintendents provide opportunities for principals to meet with them and to discuss the challenges they are facing as they provide leadership within their school. Data management could be used as a tool to guide these discussions and may help superintendents in knowing what types of professional development should be offered to principals in the future.

The responses of principals in this study pointed out that doing what's right for students is an area that warrants attention. Open discussion needs to occur between principals regarding the many ethical issues that arise during the course of their daily work. Principals can gain knowledge by hearing a wide range of perspectives regarding

student learning. Previous consideration of these issues could strengthen sustainable leadership offered across the school division.

Principals in this study often asserted by the time they addressed the mandates from the divisional and provincial levels they had little time to address long-term planning for the school. Many principals guide their staff to select school goals from division goals and no longer add any additional goals specific to their own school. However, experienced principals with a strong grasp of the purpose of education appeared to be more able to support their staff in developing a vision for their school and in seeing how divisional and provincial mandates align within the vision. In a time of globalization, a serious question for school divisions is to consider whether there is value in each school developing their own vision or whether they expect each school to adopt the school division's vision.

During this study it appeared that schools plan how to carry out the goals; whereas, the school division in reality sets most of the goals. Previous research has indicated that mandated change often results in less ownership by teachers and that a lower level of commitment results. For these reasons, past research has identified that mandated change results in progress to a certain point that tends to plateau below the desirable level. If principals are to support ongoing instructional improvement, school divisions will have to grapple with these important issues. It is also essential that both principals and teachers firmly grasp that the primary aim of school improvement goes far deeper than enhanced test results. The present situation where some principals have reverted to managerialism focused on the testing agenda will not result in sustainable leadership.

### **Implications for Succession-Planning Practices**

Responses regarding succession-planning practices can be used to guide future direction for participating school divisions. Professional development offered to teachers was perceived by principals as strong. School divisions need to consider the principals' request for more professional development for teachers focused on interpreting test results. With enhanced capacity to interpret test results firmly established, teachers will be in a position to apply this knowledge to the many tests they give within their own classroom and use it to plan for appropriate future student learning.

Past research underlined that school divisions need to be very clear about the type of leadership skills that are desired. Is the school division seeking managers of mandated change? Or conversely, is the division seeking leaders of innovation who can provide sustainable leadership for school improvement? Results of this study suggest it is essential that plans to update the criteria for recruitment to formal leadership positions be completed and then the new criteria communicated to all teachers. These criteria need to take into account both leadership skills for instructional improvement and for day-to-day operations of the school. Clear criteria will help teachers to self-assess their own suitability for future formal or informal openings and may also serve as a blueprint for future individual development plans.

Professional development is an area where principals in this study appreciated the opportunities that they had received to date. In some school divisions principals wanted more input regarding the types of professional development they are offered and believed their formal requests would soon result in changes. School divisions may also want to consider setting up formal mentorship programs for both newly assigned and experienced

principals. Many school divisions are beginning to have an increasing number of newly assigned principals often with less previous teaching experience and administrative experience. Given the limited agenda time available during monthly principals' meetings formal mentorships may be a viable way to support principals in addressing the many challenges they face while providing sustained leadership at the elementary school level. However, as stated by participants in the study, school divisions will need to carefully select the mentors they believe are capable of providing sound mentorship.

Data collected pointed out school divisions are now facing an increasing number of principal retirements and may need to place a higher value on retaining existing experienced principals. It is vital that school divisions re-examine rewards and recognition given to principals. If passion for leadership is a desired quality for elementary school principals as they provide sustainable leadership, school divisions can have a significant positive impact. Participants in this study indicated that at present this impact is often negative. It is also important to address the negative view held by teachers toward the principal's role. Making this a well respected position that receives on-going support will help to retain present leaders but will also promote the hiring of new leaders in the future.

Similarly, the participating school divisions can develop new ways to more consistently involve principals in transfer decisions. Making this a more transparent process in which open and honest conversations occur with each principal would help reduce negativity. School divisions could highlight both division and school needs within these discussions. Principals would feel more highly valued if their upcoming placements, whether to be transferred or to remain in their present school, warranted

personal discussion with their superintendent. A change in current policies could aim to underline that school divisions do value their principals and the work that they currently do in schools.

School divisions that are experiencing a high turn-over of experienced principals may want to encourage strong principals to remain for a few additional years after reaching their first possible retirement date. Consideration could be given to raising the status of these principals, perhaps as system mentors, in a way that recognizes their ability to provide leadership for their colleagues. Becoming one of four acknowledged senior system mentors within the school division might be an attractive proposal for those who currently choose to retire and seek a new experience with a different school division. It would also emphasize that the school division values the strong leadership of the selected principals.

### **Re-Conceptualization**

Much of the research regarding sustainable leadership is applicable in many organizational contexts. There is a need to set direction, develop people, and redesign the organization to meet current demands. However, researchers such as Firestone and Riehl (2005), Leithwood et al. (2006a), and MacBeath (2009), pointed out there is a unique need in schools to manage the teaching and learning program. The conceptual framework for sustainable leadership developed prior to conducting this study was generally supported by the perceptions of principals. The researcher has made two changes that will help principals to use this conceptual framework as a guide in their work.

Although part of the definition of sustainable leadership used for this study, the researcher learned through this study that it is vital to make the *focus on learning* more explicit within the conceptual framework. All educators need to use learning as their guide for all further action as they provide sustainable leadership. It is with the central core of learning in mind that principals can set direction, develop people, redesign the context and culture of the school, and manage the teaching and learning program. Maintaining a very strong focus on learning will help to guide all collaborative decision making. This includes principals helping to ensure that the school division's succession-planning practices support sustainable leadership.

Based on findings within this study, the researcher has broadened the foundational base for the conceptual framework to include all aspects of a positive learning environment. This positive learning environment still includes values, commitment, and communication but provides a broader base more conducive to the development of sustainable leadership. A positive learning environment encourages risk taking, accepts learning through mistakes, and promotes innovation and creativity. Equally important, the day-to-day operations of the school proceed in a way that is supportive of student and adult learning. Principals must ensure the on-going smooth operation of the school as a prerequisite for making progress on improved student learning. This is part of the complex task of providing sustainable leadership for school improvement. Succession-planning practices need to recognize and support this important part of a principal's work. For these reasons the researcher extended the foundation for the conceptual framework to *a positive learning environment*.

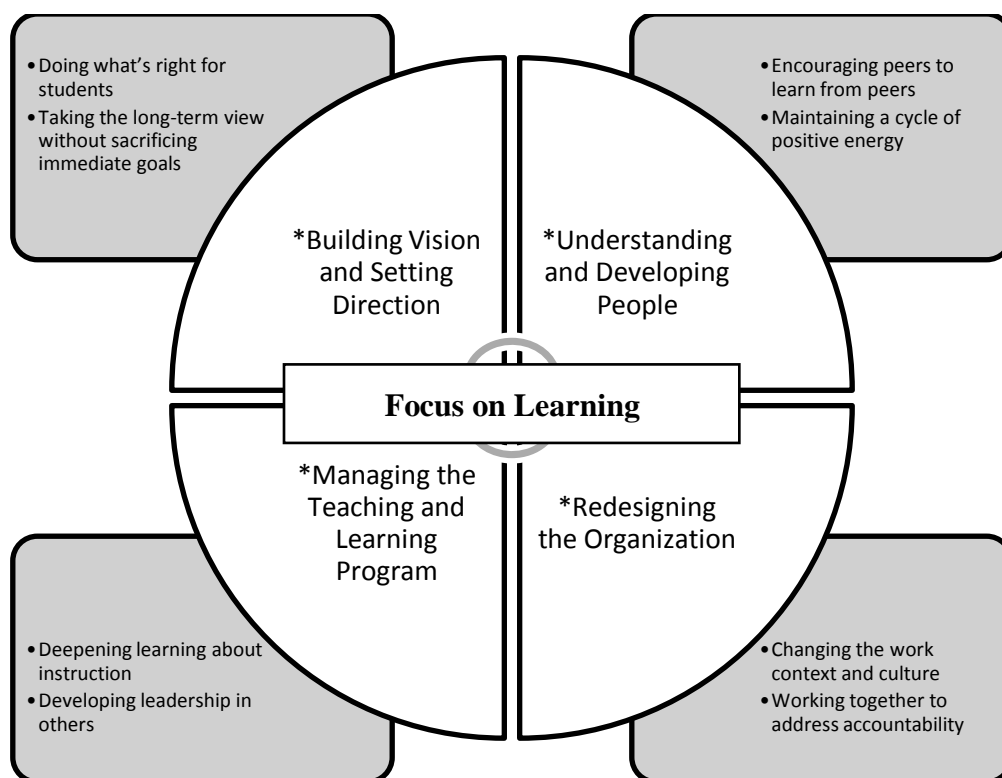


Principals involved in this study did not distinguish between *maintaining a positive energy cycle* and *working together to address accountability*. This may be because at present they often confine most of their work to that within their own school. There appears to be a fair degree of overlap between how you cultivate the human relationships necessary to encourage peers learning from peers or to redesign the organization. Both require principals who can lead in ways that teachers get on board with exploring best practice and make the changes necessary for improved student learning. Principals must be able to understand how to facilitate the task at hand in a way that teachers understand the task but also feel capable of contributing in positive ways. However, given the stage of development the schools in Saskatchewan have presently attained, it may serve a purpose to emphasize this aspect of providing sustainable leadership in both areas. Principals have a role to play within both components and they need to help cultivate supportive human relationships that will enhance progress. For leadership to be sustainable, principals must learn to lead beyond the walls of their own school, so that changes across a school division can flourish and endure. This will require principals to acquire new skills and to work effectively with people they do not know as well as their own staff members. The revised conceptual model (See Figure 6.1) may better serve as a guide for principals in this important focal point of their work.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

A total of 50 elementary school principals participated in the study. Of these, 10 also participated on the interpretive panels and 11 were interviewed. While the results are interesting and may indicate a future direction, the findings need to be interpreted with caution. It would be recommended that larger studies be conducted with principals to

**Figure 6.1**  
**Revised Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Leadership**



## Foundation: A Positive Learning Environment

\* Core Practices of Successful Leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006a)

- Adapted Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership (Fullan, 2005a)

see if the initial exploration within this study is corroborated using a larger data base. If a large study was conducted, it may then be possible to generalize the findings of the study. There would also be an opportunity to further refine the survey instrument. This would be particularly important in improving the reliability in the area of *building vision and setting direction*.

This study was restricted to consulting principals with elementary level students in their schools. However, the onus for continued improved academic achievement also applies at the secondary school level. Studies involving principals from secondary schools (grades 9–12) would also be informative. There may be convergent or divergent findings from this somewhat different educational context. In addition this study was restricted to schools open to the public where parents could voluntarily register their children. Separate schools, alternate schools or private schools would all provide a different context where similar studies could provide useful information regarding sustainable leadership and succession-planning practices.

This study focused on the perceptions of principals. However, studies could be conducted to explore the perceptions of a variety of stakeholders within the school community: students, parents, teachers, and/or community members. Studies could also extend beyond the school community to stakeholders at the division, the provincial or the national level. If *working together to address accountability* is a component of sustainable leadership, this exploration could prove to be invaluable.

Provisions for succession-planning practices in our present Saskatchewan educational system, usually involves human resources operating at the division level. Changes to provide more support for sustainable leadership would definitely require a

broader understanding than by those working at the local school level. Further studies may lead to innovative solutions.

Universities could get involved in studies, as well. In their role of providing preparation for teachers and administrators it is important that universities keep in mind the current demands of educators in schools. Universities must prepare educators for careers that will include unprecedented change. Within this role, university professors will also need to provide sustainable leadership. Universities could develop studies to explore the best way to model sustainable leadership for upcoming educators who will be the leaders of the future. Universities are also in a position to guide the development of modern succession-planning practices that will support sustainable leadership.

Under the current educational system, the provincial government bears the responsibility for improving education. They must prioritize what research they believe will best lead educators in our province in a positive direction towards ensuring students are prepared for a promising future. It is up to them to ensure that appropriate research dollars are provided. As the political leaders of our province, they too need to explore the best way to provide sustainable leadership that will support on-going improved student achievement and supportive succession-planning practices.

Future research can be conducted with a spirit of hope and enthusiasm. While we live in a world of rapid change facing many new educational challenges there are unprecedented opportunities for researchers, as well. With the instant communications available today, researchers can collaborate to solve research questions focused on the essential components of sustainable leadership and supportive succession-planning practices. The conceptual framework provided in this study may help to guide

researchers as they explore how those working at different levels within the education system can best provide sustainable leadership for improved student achievement.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Introductory Letter Requesting Participation**



## Appendix A

### Introductory Letter Requesting Participation

(Insert Date)

Dear Participant,

My name is Rosalind Hardie. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Educational Administration, College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. My research study is titled: Principals' Perceptions of the Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership and Implications for Succession Planning at the Elementary School Level: A Mixed Methods Research Study. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on [insert date].

The purpose of my research study is to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices regarding the elementary school principalship. My specific research questions are:

1. What are principals' perceptions of essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement within the elementary school principalship?
  - a. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on school context?
  - b. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's years of administrative experience?
  - c. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's tenure as principal of this school?
  - d. What evidence of similarities or differences is there based on the principal's gender?
2. What are principals' perceptions of succession-planning practices in their school division with respect to the elementary school principalship?
  - a. In light of principals' perceptions of essential components that contribute to sustainable leadership for school improvement what are the implications for succession planning?

Phase one of my study will invite all principals from elementary schools in four school divisions (two urban and two rural) to participate in an electronic survey regarding principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. These surveys will ask principals to indicate their years of experience as a

school principal and their years as principal at their current school. Principals will also be asked to indicate whether they would be willing to be interviewed during the next phase of the study or serve on an interpretive panel to assist the researcher in analyzing the data collected in the survey. The interpretive panel, made up of 3–4 principals from within each school division, will be utilized to enhance the interpretation of the results of the survey.

In phase two, a purposive sample of three to four principals per school division will be selected to be interviewed. This will allow a more in depth look at principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship.

This study will provide important information for both theory and practice regarding educational administration and the role of the principal in elementary schools. Information gathered from administrators will be used for presentations at conferences, professional discussions, or publications. The results of the survey will be used to compile a profile of principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of the present succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. Both aggregate and individual thinking will be of interest to the researcher. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be asked to check the verbatim transcript of their interview for accuracy and will have the right to vet any material they do not want included. Participants will be asked to sign a transcript release form. Direct quotations from the interviews or the surveys may be used in the reports written about this research.

Your willingness to participate in this study would be greatly appreciated. However, it is important that I indicate to you that I am a retired principal and your participation would be entirely voluntary. It is also important to acknowledge that participation in this study may result in no direct benefits for the participant. If you are willing to participate, please read and sign the consent form.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, I can be contacted by e-mail at [hardier@shaw.ca](mailto:hardier@shaw.ca) or by phone at (306) 373-0487. If you would like to contact my supervisor, Dr. David Burgess, he can be contacted by e-mail at [david.burgess@usask.ca](mailto:david.burgess@usask.ca) or by phone at (306) 966-7612. I look forward to your participation in this research.

Sincerely,

Rosalind Hardie  
Ph.D. Candidate  
College of Education  
University of Saskatchewan

## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent Form for Participants**

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form for Participants

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: Principals' Perceptions of the Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership and Implications for Succession Planning at the Elementary School Level: A Mixed Methods Research Study. **Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.**

**Researcher(s):** Rosalind Hardie, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. Contact information: e-mail: [hardier@shaw.ca](mailto:hardier@shaw.ca) or phone: (306) 373-0487.

My supervisor is Dr. David Burgess, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. Contact information: e-mail: [david.burgess@usask.ca](mailto:david.burgess@usask.ca) or phone: (306) 966-7612.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of the study is to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of present succession-planning practices with respect to the elementary school principalship.

Phase one will be an electronic survey of principals working at the elementary level in four school divisions (two urban and two rural) to examine principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of present succession-planning practices for the elementary principalship. This survey can be completed in 20–30 minutes. Participants in the survey will be asked if they would be willing to be interviewed or be part of an interpretive panel to assist with the interpretation of the collected data. Principals will be asked to self-identify if they are willing to be part of an interpretive panel or to be interviewed. By self-identifying their responses to the survey will no longer be anonymous.

An interpretive panel of three to four principals from each school division will be utilized to assist with the analysis of the data collected in the surveys. Using the demographic data provided by those who self-identify on the survey when they volunteer to serve on an interpretive panel the researcher will try to include administrators who represent both genders, principals with a variety of years of administrative experience, principals new to their current school and other principals returning to their current school and principals serving in a variety of contexts. In some cases if the number of volunteers, from a particular school division is low this may not be possible. This panel will meet for approximately one hour at a location within the local school division.

Of those who respond in the affirmative, three–four participants for each of the four school divisions will be selected to participate in the interviews that will take approximately sixty minutes.

The criteria for the selection of this purpose sample include:

- Must be an appointed principal in the selected school division
- Must participate in the survey and indicate a willingness to be interviewed
- Must have at least one year of experience as a principal in this school division
- Must acknowledge on the survey that the principal has a significant role within the area of sustainable leadership
- Must, as much as possible, support a purposive sample that includes both male and female administrators, administrators new to their school this year and those continuing in their school for another year, administrators with a variety of years of experience and administrators based in a variety of contexts
- Must be accepted for inclusion by an expert panel of judges, made up of professors from the College of Education who will be consulted during the selection process

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Only the researcher and the transcriber will hear the recordings. Participants will be asked to check the transcripts for accuracy and will have the opportunity to vet anything they may not want included in the final transcript. Once revised, participants will be provided with a copy of their transcript. At this time, each participant will be asked to sign a Transcript Release Form.

Results from the survey will be reported as a school division aggregate to indicate principals' perceptions regarding the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of present succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship. Quotations from the open-ended questions in the survey may be included in the written reports.

Results from this study will be used in my dissertation but may later be published in a journal or book, used for a presentation, or at a conference.

### **Potential Benefits:**

There may be no direct benefit to participants as a result of participating in this study. Findings from this study may have the potential to contribute to theory and practice. For some participants these findings may affect expectations of them as they fulfill the role of principal in future years. However, there is no way to know if any benefits will actually occur. There might also be applicability of findings in other areas of educational leadership.

**Potential Risks:**

Any names provided by participants in the survey responses will be removed prior to sharing of the data and the data analysis with the interpretive panel. However, it may be possible for members of the interpretive panel, who also work in the same school division, to recognize incidents reported by participants and to know who has made the statements provided. Similarly the data and data analysis (with personal identifiers removed) will be made available to an expert panel of judges, professors in the College of Education, who will help finalize the selection of participants for the interviews. Based on their work with principals throughout the province of Saskatchewan a professor may identify a particular participant's response. . Participants who include any kind of self identifying information could also be identified by others who may read the study results. However, participants will be asked to sign a Transcript Release Form after the interview and will have an opportunity to vet any comments they do not want to see included. For these reasons the researcher cannot guarantee anonymity or confidentiality for participants.

**Storage of Data:**

In order to avoid identification of any participant the surveys will be assigned a numerical code. Participants in interviews will be identified using a pseudonym. Consent forms for surveys and interviews will be stored apart from the corresponding survey form or transcript. During the study all information will be stored in a secured manner. At the completion of the study all surveys, recordings and transcripts will be securely stored and retained by Dr. David Burgess, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet for five years after the completion of the study. At that time the data will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:**

This study asks participants to reveal their own thinking with respect to the elementary school principalship. Confidentiality will be protected by identifying each returned survey using a numerical code and storing them in a secured location. From the data collected in the surveys a school division aggregated result of principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and of the current succession-planning practices for the elementary school principalship will be compiled. While individual verbatim quotes may be utilized, personal identifiers will be removed or altered with the goal of protecting any individual's anonymity.

The survey will be conducted using the University of Saskatchewan Web Survey Tool. Participants willing to participate in the survey will receive an invitation on line and a code that will allow them to access the survey and enter their responses on line. Although this survey tool alerts the researcher to which participants have responded to the survey the Web Survey Tool does not permit the researcher to track responses to the individual participant unless the participant identifies themselves or provides identifying information in their responses. The researcher has control over who can view results on line. Information Technology Services staff, employed by the university, with access to

the survey data within the purview of doing their jobs are expected to preserve confidentiality of data as set out by University policies.

Participants in the survey who volunteer to serve on an interpretive panel or to be interviewed will be asked to self identify. In these cases their responses will not be anonymous. However, to be able to apply the criteria for the purposive sample of interview candidates and the demographic characteristics of interpretative panel members the researcher will need to know their responses. In the survey when asked to self identify participants are alerted that their responses will no longer be anonymous. After all selections for these positions are finalized, these personal identifiers will be removed from the data prior to long term storage.

Data collected during interviews will also be stored in a secured location. Member checks will be utilized to check for accuracy and to allow participants to vet statements they do not want included.

Consent forms for the surveys and the interviews will be stored separately from the data collected with the goal of protecting confidentiality.

### **Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team (which includes my advisor, an expert panel of judges (professors from the College of Education), my committee and the interpretative panels). You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. However, as the Web Survey Tool used for this study, collects responses and keeps them anonymous, once the participant selects 'Finish' at the end of the survey the researcher can no longer remove their responses from the collective data.

Participants who agree to serve on an interpretive panel have the right to withdraw at any point. Any individual responses that they have made that they wish to have removed from the record of the discussion can be removed. However, as notes will include collective responses, their individual contributions to these collective responses to the point of withdrawal cannot be withdrawn.

Participants who agree to participate in the interviews and are selected to be interviewed will retain their right to withdraw from the study at any point. If a participant withdraws after an interview the researcher will delete their recording and destroy the transcript from their interview. In this case, none of the interview data initially contributed will be included.

However, in all cases —survey, interpretive panel or interview participants, once the researcher submits the final copy of the dissertation to the committee ready for defense there is no longer any way to withdraw a participant's responses.

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have other questions.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

**Follow-Up or Debriefing:**

At the end of the study a brief summary of results will be provided to participants who request it.

**Consent to Participate:**

(a) Written Consent

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

---

(Name of Participant)

---

(Date)

---

(Signature of Participant)

---

(Signature of Researcher)

E-mail Address of the Participant:

---



## **Appendix C**

### **Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Study**

## Appendix C

### Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct the Study

[Insert Name and Address of  
School Division Directors]

Dear Director,

I am a doctoral student from the Educational Administration Department, the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. I am ready to begin my research and would like permission to conduct my study within the [insert name of school division]. The title of my study is: *Principals' Perceptions of the Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership and Implications for Succession Planning at the Elementary School Level: A Mixed Methods Research Study*. My research will focus on the perceptions of principals of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. As a secondary focus I will examine principals' perceptions of present practices of succession planning regarding the elementary school principalship. There may be implications for recruitment, professional development, and retention that could be helpful to school divisions as they seek new candidates for the elementary school principalship.

I would like permission to invite all principals currently working at the elementary level in your school division to participate in an electronic survey about their perceptions regarding the principalship. This survey can be completed in 20–30 minutes. In addition each participant will be asked if they are willing to be interviewed or serve on an interpretive panel to assist the researcher with the analysis of the data collected from the survey. From those who are willing, three to four principals from each of the four participating school divisions will be selected for a follow up interview. For these participants, I anticipate the interview will take approximately one hour. From those who agree to serve on the interpretive panel, three to four principals will be asked to attend a meeting of approximately one hour at a location within the local school division.

Participants will be informed regarding the purpose of the study and participation will be voluntary. Participants will maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any point. All reasonable attempts will be made to protect anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Numerical codes will be used on surveys and pseudonyms on interview transcripts. Each participant will be asked to participate on their own time at their own convenience.

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants of the interviews will be asked to complete a member check of the transcript to ensure accuracy. Participants will have the right to vet any material they feel could compromise their anonymity or reflect negatively on their career.

Upon request each participant will be provided with a brief summary of the results of the study. The results will be used for my doctoral dissertation and may later be published in a scholarly journal or book, used for a presentation, or at a conference.

I would ask you to grant permission to access these individuals by confirming and signing this form. If you are willing to grant this permission I will need a copy of any guidelines researchers are asked to follow that are particular to your school division. I will also need a current list of the elementary school principals assigned to schools for the fall of 2010 in your school division, their school's name and address and an e-mail address for the principal.

I would be willing to answer any questions you may have by phone (306) 373-0487 or e-mail [hardier@shaw.ca](mailto:hardier@shaw.ca). If you would like to contact my supervisor, Dr. David Burgess in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, he can be contacted by e-mail at [david.burgess@usask.ca](mailto:david.burgess@usask.ca) or by phone at (306) 966-7612. If you prefer, I would be very willing to come to your office to answer any questions you may have regarding my research. I would appreciate your endorsement of my research within your school division.

---

Rosalind Hardie  
Doctoral Student  
University of Saskatchewan

---

Director of Education

---

Date

## **Appendix D**

### **Consent Form for Data Transcription Release**

## Appendix D

### Consent Form for Data Transcription Release

Study Title: Principals' Perceptions of the Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership and Implications for Succession Planning at the Elementary School Level: A Mixed Methods Research Study.

I am returning the transcript of your recorded interview.

I \_\_\_\_\_ have reviewed the complete transcript of my interview with the researcher. I have been provided the opportunity to add, alter and delete information from the transcript as I find appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said during my interview with Rosalind Hardie.

I hereby authorize the release of the transcript to be used in the manner described in the consent form. This release includes the use of quotations from the transcript.

I have received a copy of this Data Transcript Release Form for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix E**

### **Survey Instrument**



## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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Welcome to this survey. Your perspective as a school principal is very important to the researcher. It will take you 20 - 30 minutes to complete the survey.

It is important to use the navigation tools provided in the lower right of each page when navigating within the survey. Using the browser refresh or back buttons may produce unexpected results. **This survey needs to be completed in one sitting** as there is no way to save your responses midway through and then complete the survey at a later date.

The purpose of this survey is to investigate principals' perceptions of the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and current succession planning practices with respect to the elementary school principalship.

The researcher is interested in determining if similarities or differences in perceptions exist based on the principal's gender, the principal's total years of administrative experience, the principal's years of administrative tenure in the current school or the school context.

### Instructions:

Please choose the one answer for each item that most closely describes your situation.

#### A. Demographic Information

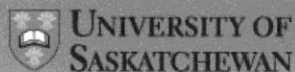
1. [Required] Your school division is

2. [Required] Your school can be described as

- ☐ An elementary school (Grades K - 8)
- ☐ A middle school (Grades 7 - 9)
- ☐ A combined elementary/secondary school (Grades K - 12)
- ☐ Other

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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3. Select all the grade levels included in your school

- ☐ PreKindergarten / Preschool
- ☐ Kindergarten
- ☐ Grade 1
- ☐ Grade 2
- ☐ Grade 3
- ☐ Grade 4
- ☐ Grade 5
- ☐ Grade 6
- ☐ Grade 7
- ☐ Grade 8
- ☐ Grade 9
- ☐ Grade 10
- ☐ Grade 11
- ☐ Grade 12

4. How many years have you been principal of your current school?

- ☐ 0 - 2 years ☐ 3 - 4 years ☐ 5 - 6 years ☐ 7 or more years

5. How many years of experience as a principal do you have?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1 - 5 years ☐ 6 - 10 years ☐ More than 10 years

6. How many years of experience as a vice-principal and/or assistant principal do you have?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1 - 5 years ☐ 6 - 10 years ☐ More than 10 years

7. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female ☐ Male

8. The socioeconomic status of your school community is mainly

- ☐ Low ☐ Middle ☐ High

9. Your school is located in a community with a population of

- ☐ Less than 5 000 ☐ 5 000-25 000 ☐ More than 25 000

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Instructions:

Please respond to the following statements about essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and current succession planning practices by indicating your level of agreement or disagreement.

**Taking into consideration your work as a principal at the elementary school level** (any portion of Grades K-8) please select only one answer for each item.

### B. Sustainable Leadership

Sustainable leadership is made up of the essential components that underpin the longer-term development of the school. Principals in their role as an administrator provide leadership in their school with respect to each of the essential components.

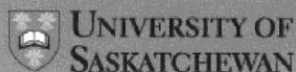
#### Doing What's Right for Students

10. Principals need to keep the primary focus in the school on improving teaching and learning  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
11. Principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
12. Principals need to provide leadership for the development of a school vision  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
13. Principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
14. It is important to support student learning that requires higher order thinking skills  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
15. Principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Taking the Long-Term View Without Sacrificing Immediate Goals

16. An important part of the principal's work is to align the vision of the school with the vision of the school division

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

17. The primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test results

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

18. It takes time for teachers to develop the capacity to make necessary instructional changes

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

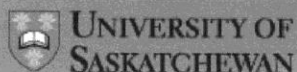
19. Equal effort must be invested in professional development and accountability for student learning

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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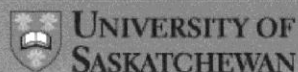
### Encouraging Peers to Learn From Peers

20. Teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
21. Internal accountability at the school level, for what students learn, is essential for school improvement  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
22. Shared leadership includes matching the needs of the school with the expertise of those involved  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
23. Principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
24. Principals need to model the kind of professional behaviour they expect from staff  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
25. Principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement  
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Maintaining a Cycle of Positive Energy

26. Professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

27. The principal must sustain a passion for leadership

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

28. Principals must have the ability to judge when it is best to raise expectations or to provide support for staff

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

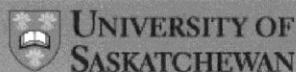
29. Principals with emotional understanding of self and others are more able to support teachers

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Deepening Learning About Instruction

30. Informed judgments need to be the basis of staff decisions about instruction

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

31. Principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

32. Principals must avoid 'one size fits all ' models

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

33. The principal must guide each staff member to further develop his/her instructional skills

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

34. Low student socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

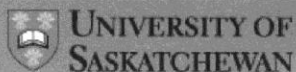
35. The principal needs to ensure that regular monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of student achievement is conducted

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Developing Leadership in Others

36. Principals should plan how leadership responsibilities/opportunities will be distributed in their school

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

37. Principals need to model shared leadership

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

38. Total collective leadership within the school has more impact on student learning than formal leadership alone

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

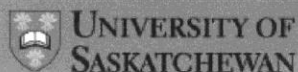
39. Principals must carefully consider the leadership maturity of each teacher

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Changing the Work Context and Culture

40. Learning needs to occur at all levels: student, teacher, parent, and administrator

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

41. Teachers need to be valued as professionals

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

42. Depending on the context of the school, principals may need to carry out leadership tasks differently

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

43. Teacher professional autonomy includes taking collective responsibility for student learning

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

44. Principals must ensure that adequate supports, such as professional development, teaching materials, and planning time, are provided

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

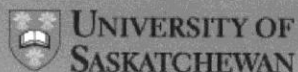
45. Principals must maintain a strong emphasis on collaboration with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, and community members

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Quit - Do not save answers

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## Preview of Survey: Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement and Succession Planning Practices

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### Working Together to Address Accountability

46. A recognition of interdependence, by those working to improve education, is necessary in order to support effective school improvement

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

47. Teachers, principals, special education consultants, central office administrators, trustees, and government representatives need to work together to establish reasonable goals

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

48. The principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

49. Positive, respectful, working relationships need to be established at all levels and between levels within the educational system

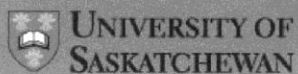
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

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### Additional Comments about Sustainable Leadership for School Improvement

50. Please write any comments you would like to share about the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement. This may include comments about the previously mentioned components or additional components you believe should be included.

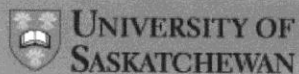
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51. Please write any comments you would like to share about unique contextual issues that affect sustainable leadership in your current school.

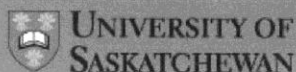
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### C. Succession Planning Practices

#### **Instructions**

Succession planning for the elementary school principalship includes the practices in the organization that are intended to support having the leaders needed for the future. Please respond to the following statements with respect to succession planning within **your school division**.

#### **Professional Development for Teachers**

52. The criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

53. Teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

54. Principals in the school division are expected to discuss career plans with each teacher on a regular basis (at least annually)

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

55. Nurturing the long-term potential of employees is valued in your school division

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

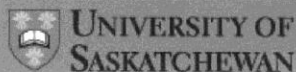
56. There are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

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### Recruitment to Formal Leadership Positions

57. Criteria for the formal leadership position of elementary school principal are clearly established in the school division

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

58. The school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

59. Selection committees are inclusive with respect to gender, race, and culture when selecting candidates for the elementary school principalship

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

60. External candidates are considered for formal leadership positions

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

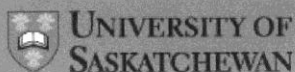
61. Many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

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### Professional Development for Principals

62. Principals understand the importance of good communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly assigned principal, to ensure appropriate continuity for school improvement

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

63. Principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operation of the school

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

64. Adequate professional development regarding data management is offered to principals

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

65. In our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher's career

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

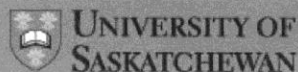
66. A principal is often left alone 'to just do the job' without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills

- ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

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### Retention of School Principals

67. Principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure changes are well established

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

68. It is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

69. Due to high stress levels, an increasing number of principals are choosing early retirement

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

70. The rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

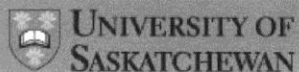
71. Principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither disagree nor agree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

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### Additional Comments About Current Succession Planning Practices:

72. Please write any comments you would like to share about current succession planning practices in your school division.

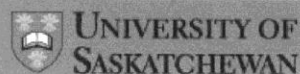
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### D. Rating Your Own Use of Essential Components of Sustainable Leadership

#### Instructions

Taking into consideration your work as principal at the elementary school level (any portion of Grades K-8) during the past twelve months rank your use of the essential components of sustainable leadership. Please select only one answer for each component.

73. Deepening learning about instruction

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

74. Taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

75. Encouraging peers to learn from peers

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

76. Working together to address accountability

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

77. Doing what's right for students

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

78. Developing leadership in others

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

79. Changing the work context and culture

☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

80. Maintaining a cycle of positive energy

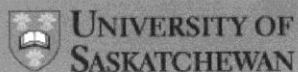
☐ Consistently ☐ Usually ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

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### E. Further Participation in This Study

81. Would you be willing to participate in an interview about the essential components of sustainable leadership for school improvement and current succession planning practices for the elementary school principalship? This interview would take place at your school this April or May at a mutually acceptable time and would take approximately 60 minutes.

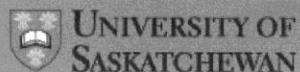
☐ Yes ☐ No

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82. You have indicated a willingness to be interviewed. Please provide your name, your school phone number, and your e-mail address. (Up until this point your survey responses have been anonymous. However, the researcher can select you for an interview only if you provide this information)

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83. Would you be willing to be part of an interpretive panel to look at the researcher's analysis of the results of the survey in order to offer further insights? This interpretive panel would include three to four principals from the same school division meeting with the researcher this March or April for approximately 60 minutes.

☐ Yes ☐ No

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84. You have indicated a willingness to serve on an interpretive panel. Please provide your name, your school phone number, and your e-mail address. (Up until this point your survey responses have been anonymous. However, the researcher can select you for an interpretive panel only if you provide this information)

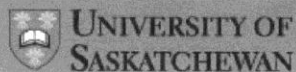
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**The researcher thanks you for participating in this survey and values your input.** Please be advised only three to four principals in each school division will be contacted to participate on the interpretive panels or in the interviews.

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**Appendix F**  
**Interview Protocol**

## Appendix F

### Interview Protocol

#### (To be further refined at the end of Phase One of the Study)

“Sustainable Leadership is made up of ... [essential components] that underpin the longer-term development of the school. It builds a leadership culture based on moral purpose which provides success that is accessible to all”

(Davies, B., *Developing Sustainable School Leadership*, p. 2)

1. What are the essential components of sustainable leadership you find useful in your work on school improvement?

#### Setting Direction

- i. Doing what’s right for students
- ii. Taking the long-term view without sacrificing immediate goals

#### Developing People

- iii. Encouraging peers to learn from peers
- iv. Maintaining a cycle of positive energy

#### Managing the Teaching and Learning Program

- v. Deepening learning about instruction
- vi. Developing leadership in others

#### Redesigning the Organization

- vii. Changing the work context and culture
- viii. Moving towards mutual influence

2. What are the main features of succession planning for the elementary school principalship in your school division?
  - a. Development of Teachers
  - b. Recruitment to Formal Leadership Positions
  - c. Professional Development for Principals
  - d. Retention of School Principals
3. From your perspective are the essential components of sustainable leadership and current succession-planning practices aligned?
  - a. If not what changes need to be made?
4. What artifacts have you chosen to share that illustrate your sustainable leadership?
  - a. Could you comment on the significance of each choice?



## **Appendix G**

### **Participant Numbers and Associated School Divisions**

## **Appendix G**

### **Participant Numbers and Associated School Divisions**

#### Participants from Rural School Division 1

The following 9 participants:

#1, 3, 18, 20, 22, 28, 29, 31, 38

#### Participants from Rural School Division 2

The following 14 participants:

#4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 16, 23, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 51, 53

#### Participants from Urban School Division 1

The following 19 participants:

#2, 7, 12, 14, 17, 21, 25, 25, 26, 30, 36, 39, 42, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52

#### Participants from Urban School Division 2

The following 8 participants:

#9, 10, 15, 19, 40, 41, 44, 46

## **Appendix H**

### **Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies**

## Appendix H

### Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies

#### Frequencies for All Four School Divisions

**Primary Focus: Question 10**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	1	2.0	2.0	4.0
	4	11	22.0	22.0	26.0
	5	37	74.0	74.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Focus on Own Students: Question 11**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	25	50.0	50.0	50.0
	2	21	42.0	42.0	92.0
	3	1	2.0	2.0	94.0
	4	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**School Vision: Question 12**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	4	15	30.0	30.0	34.0
	5	33	66.0	66.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Success for All Students: Question 13**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
	5	39	78.0	78.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Higher Order Thinking Skills: Question 14**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	38.0
	5	31	62.0	62.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Affect on Other Schools: Question 15**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	4	8.0	8.0	12.0
	3	18	36.0	36.0	48.0
	4	20	40.0	40.0	88.0
	5	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Alignment: Question 16**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	5	10.0	10.0	12.0
	4	25	50.0	50.0	62.0
	5	19	38.0	38.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Test results: Question 17**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	3	21	42.0	42.0	62.0
	4	11	22.0	22.0	84.0
	5	8	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Capacity Building: Question 18**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	29	58.0	58.0	58.0
	5	21	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Equal Effort PD/Accountability: Question 19**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	3	6.0	6.0	8.0
	4	22	44.0	44.0	52.0
	5	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Learning Organization: Question 20**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
	5	37	74.0	74.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Internal Accountability: Question 21**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	24	48.0	48.0	48.0
	5	26	52.0	52.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Shared Leadership: Question 22**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	44.0
	5	28	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Teachers Learning with Peers: Question 23**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	15	30.0	30.0	32.0
	5	34	68.0	68.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Model Professional Behaviour: Question 24**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	5	43	86.0	86.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Involving Parents: Question 25**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	10	20.0	20.0	22.0
	4	26	52.0	52.0	74.0
	5	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Prof Networks: Question 26**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	5	10.0	10.0	12.0
	4	38	76.0	76.0	88.0
	5	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Passion for Leadership: Question 27**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	14	28.0	28.0	30.0
	5	35	70.0	70.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Pressure/Support: Question 28**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	21	42.0	42.0	44.0
	5	28	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	



**Emotional Understanding: Question 29**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	19	38.0	38.0	40.0
	5	30	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Informed Judgment: Question 30**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	4	29	58.0	58.0	64.0
	5	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Culture Seeking Improvement: Question 31**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
	5	37	74.0	74.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Diversity of Models: Question 32**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	4	17	34.0	34.0	38.0
	5	31	62.0	62.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Develop Instructional Skills: Question 33**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	6	12.0	12.2	12.2
	4	19	38.0	38.8	51.0
	5	24	48.0	49.0	100.0
	Total	49	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		50	100.0		

**Socioeconomics Defeat Teacher Efforts: Question 34**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	1	2.0	2.0	4.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	40.0
	5	30	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Monitoring Student Achievement: Question 35**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	27	54.0	54.0	54.0
	5	23	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Plan to Distribute Leadership: Question 36**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	6	12.0	12.0	14.0
	4	29	58.0	58.0	72.0
	5	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Model Shared Leadership: Question 37**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
	5	28	56.0	56.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Collective Leadership: Question 38**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	4	24	48.0	48.0	54.0
	5	23	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Leadership Maturity: Question 39**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	4	29	58.0	58.0	72.0
	5	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Learning at All Levels: Question 40**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	5	36	72.0	72.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Valued Professionals: Question 41**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4	8	16.0	16.0	18.0
	5	41	82.0	82.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Context Affects Leadership: Question 42**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	26	52.0	52.0	52.0
	5	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Collective Responsibility: Question 43**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	1	2.0	2.0	4.0
	4	26	52.0	52.0	56.0
	5	22	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Supports: Question 44**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3	1	2.0	2.0	4.0
	4	19	38.0	38.0	42.0
	5	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Collaboration at the Local Level: Question 45**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	20	40.0	40.0	40.0
	5	30	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Interdependence: Question 46**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	4	29	58.0	58.0	66.0
	5	17	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Collaboration Across Levels: Question 47**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	4	22	44.0	44.0	50.0
	5	25	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Principal Leadership Crucial: Question 48**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	5	40	80.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Working Relationships: Question 49**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	5	40	80.0	80.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers: Question 52**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	2	15	30.0	30.0	44.0
	3	9	18.0	18.0	62.0
	4	13	26.0	26.0	88.0
	5	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Leadership Opportunities: Question 53**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	3	4	8.0	8.0	16.0
	4	33	66.0	66.0	82.0
	5	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Teacher Career Plans: Question 54**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	7	14.0	14.0	18.0
	3	10	20.0	20.0	38.0
	4	18	36.0	36.0	74.0
	5	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Long-Term Potential: Question 55**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	7	14.0	14.0	18.0
	3	17	34.0	34.0	52.0
	4	17	34.0	34.0	86.0
	5	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Leadership Development: Question 56**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	3	6	12.0	12.0	22.0
	4	32	64.0	64.0	86.0
	5	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Criteria Established: Question 57**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2	16	32.0	32.0	38.0
	3	12	24.0	24.0	62.0
	4	13	26.0	26.0	88.0
	5	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Pool of Candidates: Question 58**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2	10	20.0	20.0	22.0
	3	12	24.0	24.0	46.0
	4	20	40.0	40.0	86.0
	5	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Equal Opportunity: Question 59**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2	3	6.0	6.0	12.0
	3	13	26.0	26.0	38.0
	4	21	42.0	42.0	80.0
	5	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**External Candidates: Question 60**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2	4	8.0	8.0	10.0
	3	6	12.0	12.0	22.0
	4	30	60.0	60.0	82.0
	5	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	



**View of Principal Role: Question 61**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
	2	28	56.0	56.0	82.0
	3	5	10.0	10.0	92.0
	4	3	6.0	6.0	98.0
	5	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Continuity of Direction: Question 62**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	3	9	18.0	18.0	26.0
	4	27	54.0	54.0	80.0
	5	10	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Support to Maintain Focus: Question 63**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	19	38.0	38.0	42.0
	3	12	24.0	24.0	66.0
	4	13	26.0	26.0	92.0
	5	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Data Management: Question 64**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	8	16.0	16.0	16.0
	3	15	30.0	30.0	46.0
	4	23	46.0	46.0	92.0
	5	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Nurture Leadership Skills: Question 65**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
	2	18	36.0	36.0	44.0
	3	12	24.0	24.0	68.0
	4	12	24.0	24.0	92.0
	5	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Lack of Support: Question 66**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	14	28.0	28.0	32.0
	3	13	26.0	26.0	58.0
	4	16	32.0	32.0	90.0
	5	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**5 Years in a School: Question 67**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	14	28.0	28.0	28.0
	3	16	32.0	32.0	60.0
	4	17	34.0	34.0	94.0
	5	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Rejuvenation: Question 68**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	7	14.0	14.0	18.0
	3	17	34.0	34.0	52.0
	4	20	40.0	40.0	92.0
	5	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Early Retirement: Question 69**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2	9	18.0	18.0	28.0
	3	21	42.0	42.0	70.0
	4	12	24.0	24.0	94.0
	5	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Rewards/Recognition: Question 70**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2	20	40.0	40.0	50.0
	3	16	32.0	32.0	82.0
	4	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Involved in Transfer Decisions: Question 71**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	10	20.0	20.0	20.0
	2	11	22.0	22.0	42.0
	3	15	30.0	30.0	72.0
	4	13	26.0	26.0	98.0
	5	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Deepening Learning: Question 73**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	2	28	56.0	56.0	60.0
	3	20	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Long Term View: Question 74**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
	2	22	44.0	44.0	58.0
	3	21	42.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Learning from Peers: Question 75**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	6.0	6.1	6.1
	2	13	26.0	26.5	32.7
	3	33	66.0	67.3	100.0
	Total	49	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		50	100.0		

**Mutual Influence: Question 76**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2	26	52.0	52.0	54.0
	3	23	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Right for Students: Question 77**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	3	47	94.0	94.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Developing Leadership: Question 78**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	2	25	50.0	50.0	56.0
	3	22	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Work Context/Culture: Question 79**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	14.0	14.3	14.3
	2	28	56.0	57.1	71.4
	3	14	28.0	28.6	100.0
	Total	49	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		50	100.0		

**Positive Energy: Question 80**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	21	42.0	42.0	42.0
	3	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
Total		50	100.0	100.0	

**Appendix I**  
**Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations**

## Appendix I

### Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations

#### Rural School Division 1:

Descriptive Statistics					
Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Primary Focus	9	3	5	4.56	.726
Focus on Own Students	9	1	3	1.89	.601
School Vision	9	4	5	4.56	.527
Success for All Students	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Higher Order Thinking Skills	9	4	5	4.33	.500
Affect on Other Schools	9	2	5	3.56	.882
Alignment	9	2	5	4.00	1.000
Test results	9	2	5	3.22	1.202
Capacity Building	9	4	5	4.33	.500
Equal Effort	9	4	5	4.56	.527
PD/Accountability					
Learning Organization	9	4	5	4.56	.527
Internal Accountability	9	4	5	4.33	.500
Shared Leadership	9	3	5	4.44	.726
Teachers Learning with Peers	9	4	5	4.44	.527
Model Professional Behaviour	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Involving Parents	9	3	5	3.78	.667
Prof Networks	9	3	5	4.22	.667
Passion for Leadership	9	4	5	4.56	.527
Pressure/Support	9	3	5	4.33	.707
Emotional Understanding	9	4	5	4.44	.527
Informed Judgment	9	4	5	4.22	.441
Culture Seeking Improvement	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Diversity of Models	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Develop Instructional Skills	9	3	5	4.11	.782
Socioeconomics Defeat	9	4	5	4.44	.527
Teacher Efforts					



Monitoring Student Achievement	9	4	5	4.22	.441
Plan to Distribute Leadership	9	3	5	4.00	.707
Model Shared Leadership	9	4	5	4.44	.527
Collective Leadership	9	4	5	4.11	.333
Leadership Maturity	9	3	5	4.11	.601
Learning at All Levels	9	4	5	4.89	.333
Valued Professionals	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Context Affects Leadership	9	4	5	4.33	.500
Collective Responsibility	9	4	5	4.33	.500
Supports	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Collaboration at the Local Level	9	4	5	4.44	.527
Interdependence	9	3	5	4.11	.601
Collaboration Across Levels	9	3	5	4.11	.601
Principal Leadership Crucial	9	4	5	4.89	.333
Working Relationships	9	4	5	4.67	.500
Mean	9	4.03	4.65	4.2889	.22677
Valid N (listwise)	9				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Succession-Planning Practices	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers	9	1	5	2.89	1.453
Leadership Opportunities	9	2	5	3.89	.782
Teacher Career Plans	9	1	5	3.44	1.333
Long-Term Potential	9	2	5	3.56	1.014
Leadership Development	9	2	5	3.67	1.000
Criteria Established	9	1	5	2.89	1.269
Pool of Candidates	9	1	5	3.56	1.333
Equal Opportunity	9	1	5	3.44	1.509

External Candidates	9	1	5	3.22	1.202
View of Principal Role	9	2	4	2.33	.707
Continuity of Direction	9	2	5	3.67	1.118
Support to Maintain Focus	9	2	5	3.56	.882
Data Management	9	3	5	3.89	.601
Nurture Leadership Skills	9	1	5	3.22	1.202
Lack of Support	9	2	4	3.22	.833
5 Years in a School	9	3	4	3.67	.500
Rejuvenation	9	3	4	3.56	.527
Early Retirement	9	1	4	3.00	1.000
Rewards/Recognition	9	2	4	2.56	.726
Involved in Transfer	9	1	4	2.44	1.236
Decisions					
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	9	2.00	4.10	3.2833	.73527
Valid N (listwise)	9				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deepening Learning	9	1	3	2.33	.707
Long Term View	9	2	3	2.44	.527
Learning from Peers	9	2	3	2.78	.441
Mutual Influence	9	2	3	2.33	.500
Right for Students	9	2	3	2.89	.333
Developing Leadership	9	2	3	2.44	.527
Work Context/Culture	9	1	3	1.89	.782
Positive Energy	9	2	3	2.67	.500
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	9	2.00	2.88	2.4722	.24826
Valid N (listwise)	9				

**Rural School Division 2:****Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Sustainable Leadership</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Primary Focus	14	4	5	4.79	.426
Focus on Own Students	14	1	2	1.50	.519
School Vision	14	4	5	4.64	.497
Success for All Students	14	4	5	4.71	.469
Higher Order Thinking Skills	14	3	5	4.43	.646
Affect on Other Schools	14	1	5	3.14	1.027
Alignment	14	3	5	4.00	.555
Test results	14	2	5	3.00	.877
Capacity Building	14	4	5	4.29	.469
Equal Effort	14	3	5	4.21	.699
PD/Accountability					
Learning Organization	14	4	5	4.71	.469
Internal Accountability	14	4	5	4.50	.519
Shared Leadership	14	4	5	4.64	.497
Teachers Learning with Peers	14	4	5	4.57	.514
Model Professional Behaviour	14	4	5	4.86	.363
Involving Parents	14	2	4	3.43	.646
Prof Networks	14	2	5	3.93	.730
Passion for Leadership	14	4	5	4.79	.426
Pressure/Support	14	4	5	4.57	.514
Emotional Understanding	14	4	5	4.50	.519
Informed Judgment	14	3	5	4.14	.663
Culture Seeking Improvement	14	4	5	4.64	.497
Diversity of Models	14	3	5	4.50	.650
Develop Instructional Skills	14	3	5	4.43	.646
Socioeconomics Defeat	14	1	5	4.21	1.122
Teacher Efforts					
Monitoring Student Achievement	14	4	5	4.29	.469
Plan to Distribute Leadership	14	2	5	3.93	.829

Model Shared Leadership	14	4	5	4.36	.497
Collective Leadership	14	3	5	4.14	.663
Leadership Maturity	14	3	5	4.14	.535
Learning at All Levels	14	4	5	4.50	.519
Valued Professionals	14	3	5	4.79	.579
Context Affects Leadership	14	4	5	4.36	.497
Collective Responsibility	14	4	5	4.36	.497
Supports	14	3	5	4.43	.646
Collaboration at the Local Level	14	4	5	4.36	.497
Interdependence	14	3	5	4.36	.633
Collaboration Across Levels	14	4	5	4.64	.497
Principal Leadership Crucial	14	4	5	4.64	.497
Working Relationships	14	4	5	4.86	.363
Mean for Sustainable Leadership	14	3.90	4.70	4.2821	.25181
Valid N (listwise)	14				

## Descriptive Statistics

Succession-Planning Practices	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers	14	1	5	3.00	1.109
Leadership Opportunities	14	2	5	4.07	.730
Teacher Career Plans	14	2	5	3.64	1.008
Long-Term Potential	14	1	4	2.79	.975
Leadership Development	14	2	4	3.64	.745
Criteria Established	14	1	5	2.86	1.027
Pool of Candidates	14	2	5	2.71	.825
Equal Opportunity	14	1	5	3.14	1.027
External Candidates	14	3	5	4.07	.616
View of Principal Role	14	1	3	1.57	.646
Continuity of Direction	14	3	5	3.93	.616
Support to Maintain Focus	14	2	5	3.07	1.072

Data Management	14	2	5	3.14	.864
Nurture Leadership Skills	14	2	5	2.57	.938
Lack of Support	14	2	5	3.50	1.019
5 Years in a School	14	2	4	3.36	.633
Rejuvenation	14	1	5	3.00	.961
Early Retirement	14	1	4	2.43	.938
Rewards/Recognition	14	1	4	2.64	1.008
Involved in Transfer	14	2	4	3.07	.616
Decisions					
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	14	2.35	4.40	3.1107	.52776
Valid N (listwise)	14				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deepening Learning	14	1	3	2.36	.633
Long Term View	14	1	3	2.07	.730
Learning from Peers	13	1	3	2.23	.832
Mutual Influence	14	2	3	2.43	.514
Right for Students	14	2	3	2.93	.267
Developing Leadership	14	1	3	2.14	.663
Work Context/Culture	14	1	3	2.00	.679
Positive Energy	14	2	3	2.57	.514
Mean for Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership	14	1.75	3.00	2.3457	.38072
Valid N (listwise)	13				

**Urban School Division 1:****Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Sustainable Leadership</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Primary Focus	19	2	5	4.68	.749
Focus on Own Students	19	1	4	1.47	.964
School Vision	19	3	5	4.74	.562
Success for All Students	19	4	5	4.95	.229
Higher Order Thinking Skills	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Affect on Other Schools	19	2	5	3.68	.885
Alignment	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Test results	19	2	5	3.47	.964
Capacity Building	19	4	5	4.47	.513
Equal Effort	19	2	5	4.42	.838
PD/Accountability					
Learning Organization	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Internal Accountability	19	4	5	4.53	.513
Shared Leadership	19	3	5	4.32	.749
Teachers Learning with Peers	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Model Professional Behaviour	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Involving Parents	19	4	5	4.47	.513
Prof Networks	19	3	5	3.95	.405
Passion for Leadership	19	4	5	4.74	.452
Pressure/Support	19	4	5	4.58	.507
Emotional Understanding	19	4	5	4.68	.478
Informed Judgment	19	3	5	4.42	.607
Culture Seeking Improvement	19	4	5	4.84	.375
Diversity of Models	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Develop Instructional Skills	18	3	5	4.56	.616
Socioeconomics Defeat	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Teacher Efforts					
Monitoring Student Achievement	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Plan to Distribute Leadership	19	3	5	4.21	.631

Model Shared Leadership	19	4	5	4.68	.478
Collective Leadership	19	3	5	4.63	.597
Leadership Maturity	19	3	5	4.05	.705
Learning at All Levels	19	4	5	4.79	.419
Valued Professionals	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Context Affects Leadership	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Collective Responsibility	19	3	5	4.47	.612
Supports	19	4	5	4.63	.496
Collaboration at the Local Level	19	4	5	4.74	.452
Interdependence	19	3	5	4.32	.582
Collaboration Across Levels	19	4	5	4.53	.513
Principal Leadership Crucial	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Working Relationships	19	4	5	4.89	.315
Mean for Sustainable Leadership	19	4.13	4.78	4.4858	.20816
Valid N (listwise)	18				

## Descriptive Statistics

Succession-Planning Practices	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers	19	1	5	2.68	1.204
Leadership Opportunities	19	2	4	3.63	.684
Teacher Career Plans	19	2	5	3.84	1.068
Long-Term Potential	19	2	5	3.63	.955
Leadership Development	19	2	5	4.00	.667
Criteria Established	19	1	5	3.11	1.197
Pool of Candidates	19	2	5	3.79	.713
Equal Opportunity	19	3	5	4.00	.745
External Candidates	19	2	5	4.00	.667
View of Principal Role	19	1	5	2.05	1.079
Continuity of Direction	19	2	5	4.00	.816
Support to Maintain Focus	19	1	5	2.68	1.057
Data Management	19	2	5	3.47	.841

Nurture Leadership Skills	19	1	4	2.63	1.012
Lack of Support	19	1	5	2.95	1.268
5 Years in a School	19	2	5	3.11	1.049
Rejuvenation	19	2	5	3.63	.895
Early Retirement	19	1	5	3.21	1.032
Rewards/Recognition	19	1	4	2.63	.955
Involved in Transfer	19	1	5	2.58	1.387
Decisions					
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	19	2.45	4.10	3.2816	.47147
Valid N (listwise)	19				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deepening Learning	19	2	3	2.42	.507
Long Term View	19	1	3	2.42	.769
Learning from Peers	19	2	3	2.74	.452
Mutual Influence	19	1	3	2.37	.597
Right for Students	19	3	3	3.00	.000
Developing Leadership	19	1	3	2.53	.612
Work Context/Culture	18	2	3	2.39	.502
Positive Energy	19	2	3	2.58	.507
Mean for Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership	19	2.13	3.00	2.5583	.29468
Valid N (listwise)	18				



**Urban School Division 2:****Descriptive Statistics**

<b>Sustainable Leadership</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Primary Focus	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Focus on Own Students	8	1	4	2.00	.926
School Vision	8	3	5	4.38	.744
Success for All Students	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Higher Order Thinking Skills	8	4	5	4.50	.535
Affect on Other Schools	8	1	4	3.50	1.069
Alignment	8	3	5	4.00	.756
Test results	8	3	5	3.75	.886
Capacity Building	8	4	5	4.62	.518
Equal Effort	8	4	5	4.38	.518
PD/Accountability					
Learning Organization	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Internal Accountability	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Shared Leadership	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Teachers Learning with Peers	8	2	5	4.38	1.061
Model Professional Behaviour	8	5	5	5.00	.000
Involving Parents	8	3	5	4.25	.707
Prof Networks	8	3	4	3.87	.354
Passion for Leadership	8	3	5	4.50	.756
Pressure/Support	8	4	5	4.62	.518
Emotional Understanding	8	3	5	4.63	.744
Informed Judgment	8	4	5	4.38	.518
Culture Seeking Improvement	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Diversity of Models	8	3	5	4.50	.756
Develop Instructional Skills	8	3	5	4.13	.835
Socioeconomics Defeat	8	4	5	4.88	.354
Teacher Efforts					
Monitoring Student Achievement	8	4	5	4.62	.518
Plan to Distribute Leadership	8	4	5	4.38	.518

Model Shared Leadership	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Collective Leadership	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Leadership Maturity	8	3	5	4.38	.744
Learning at All Levels	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Valued Professionals	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Context Affects Leadership	8	4	5	4.50	.535
Collective Responsibility	8	2	5	4.25	1.035
Supports	8	2	5	4.25	1.035
Collaboration at the Local Level	8	4	5	4.88	.354
Interdependence	8	3	5	4.13	.641
Collaboration Across Levels	8	3	5	4.25	.886
Principal Leadership Crucial	8	4	5	4.75	.463
Working Relationships	8	4	5	4.63	.518
Mean for Sustainable Leadership	8	3.93	4.65	4.4031	.28045
Valid N (listwise)	8				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Succession-Planning Practices	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers	8	1	5	3.38	1.598
Leadership Opportunities	8	3	5	4.50	.756
Teacher Career Plans	8	1	5	3.50	1.414
Long-Term Potential	8	2	5	3.75	1.035
Leadership Development	8	2	5	3.88	.991
Criteria Established	8	2	5	3.50	1.195
Pool of Candidates	8	2	5	3.75	1.165
Equal Opportunity	8	2	5	3.88	.991
External Candidates	8	2	5	3.75	1.165
View of Principal Role	8	2	4	2.38	.744
Continuity of Direction	8	2	5	3.63	.916
Support to Maintain Focus	8	1	4	2.75	1.165
Data Management	8	2	5	3.50	1.069

Nurture Leadership Skills	8	1	5	3.63	1.302
Lack of Support	8	2	4	3.00	.926
5 Years in a School	8	2	5	2.50	1.069
Rejuvenation	8	1	5	3.00	1.309
Early Retirement	8	2	5	3.38	1.061
Rewards/Recognition	8	1	4	2.38	.916
Involved in Transfer	8	1	4	2.50	1.069
Decisions					
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	8	2.35	4.35	3.3250	.71063
Valid N (listwise)	8				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deepening Learning	8	2	3	2.25	.463
Long Term View	8	1	3	2.13	.641
Learning from Peers	8	2	3	2.75	.463
Mutual Influence	8	2	3	2.75	.463
Right for Students	8	2	3	2.87	.354
Developing Leadership	8	2	3	2.38	.518
Work Context/Culture	8	1	3	2.13	.641
Positive Energy	8	2	3	2.50	.535
Mean for Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership	8	2.00	2.75	2.4687	.24776
Valid N (listwise)	8				

**Four School Divisions:**

Descriptive Statistics					
Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Primary Focus	50	2	5	4.68	.621
Focus on Own Students	50	1	4	1.64	.802
School Vision	50	3	5	4.62	.567
Success for All Students	50	4	5	4.78	.418
Higher Order Thinking Skills	50	3	5	4.60	.535
Affect on Other Schools	50	1	5	3.48	.953
Alignment	50	2	5	4.24	.716
Test results	50	2	5	3.34	.982
Capacity Building	50	4	5	4.42	.499
Equal Effort	50	2	5	4.38	.697
PD/Accountability					
Learning Organization	50	4	5	4.74	.443
Internal Accountability	50	4	5	4.52	.505
Shared Leadership	50	3	5	4.48	.646
Teachers Learning with Peers	50	2	5	4.64	.598
Model Professional Behaviour	50	4	5	4.86	.351
Involving Parents	50	2	5	4.02	.742
Prof Networks	50	2	5	3.98	.553
Passion for Leadership	50	3	5	4.68	.513
Pressure/Support	50	3	5	4.54	.542
Emotional Understanding	50	3	5	4.58	.538
Informed Judgment	50	3	5	4.30	.580
Culture Seeking Improvement	50	4	5	4.74	.443
Diversity of Models	50	3	5	4.58	.575
Develop Instructional Skills	49	3	5	4.37	.698
Socioeconomics Defeat	50	1	5	4.52	.735
Teacher Efforts					
Monitoring Student Achievement	50	4	5	4.46	.503

Plan to Distribute Leadership	50	2	5	4.12	.689
Model Shared Leadership	50	4	5	4.56	.501
Collective Leadership	50	3	5	4.40	.606
Leadership Maturity	50	3	5	4.14	.639
Learning at All Levels	50	4	5	4.72	.454
Valued Professionals	50	3	5	4.80	.452
Context Affects Leadership	50	4	5	4.48	.505
Collective Responsibility	50	2	5	4.38	.635
Supports	50	2	5	4.52	.646
Collaboration at the Local Level	50	4	5	4.60	.495
Interdependence	50	3	5	4.26	.600
Collaboration Across Levels	50	3	5	4.44	.611
Principal Leadership Crucial	50	4	5	4.80	.404
Working Relationships	50	4	5	4.80	.404
Mean for Sustainable Leadership	50	3.90	4.78	4.3801	.24711
Valid N (listwise)	49				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Succession-Planning Practices	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria for Leadership Positions Communicated to Teachers	50	1	5	2.92	1.275
Leadership Opportunities	50	2	5	3.94	.767
Teacher Career Plans	50	1	5	3.66	1.136
Long-Term Potential	50	1	5	3.40	1.030
Leadership Development	50	2	5	3.82	.800
Criteria Established	50	1	5	3.06	1.150
Pool of Candidates	50	1	5	3.44	1.033
Equal Opportunity	50	1	5	3.64	1.064
External Candidates	50	1	5	3.84	.889
View of Principal Role	50	1	5	2.02	.892
Continuity of Direction	50	2	5	3.86	.833
Support to Maintain Focus	50	1	5	2.96	1.068

Data Management	50	2	5	3.46	.862
Nurture Leadership Skills	50	1	5	2.88	1.118
Lack of Support	50	1	5	3.16	1.076
5 Years in a School	50	2	5	3.18	.919
Rejuvenation	50	1	5	3.34	.961
Early Retirement	50	1	5	2.98	1.040
Rewards/Recognition	50	1	4	2.58	.906
Involved in Transfer	50	1	5	2.68	1.133
Decisions					
Mean for Succession- Planning Practices	50	2.00	4.40	3.2410	.56827
Valid N (listwise)	50				

#### Descriptive Statistics

Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deepening Learning	50	1	3	2.36	.563
Long Term View	50	1	3	2.28	.701
Learning from Peers	49	1	3	2.61	.606
Mutual Influence	50	1	3	2.44	.541
Right for Students	50	2	3	2.94	.240
Developing Leadership	50	1	3	2.38	.602
Work Context/Culture	49	1	3	2.14	.645
Positive Energy	50	2	3	2.58	.499
Mean for Use of Components of Sustainable Leadership	50	1.75	3.00	2.4689	.31084
Valid N (listwise)	48				

**Appendix J**  
**Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Data**

**Table J.1**

**Sustainable Leadership: Maintaining a Cycle of Positive Energy**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
88%	Agreed	Q26 Professional networks can help the principal to cope with provincial mandates	<u>Jack</u> : It is incredibly valuable <u>#49</u> : Had I been new to the system without an established network, my first year would have been monumentally more challenging
98%	Agreed	Q27 The principal must sustain a passion for leadership	<u>#11</u> : Teachers must see the principal as passionate about creating opportunities for success for students
98%	Agreed	Q28 Principals must have the ability to judge when it is best to raise expectations or to provide support for staff	<u>Cindy</u> : Being able to understand that [teaching responsibilities] and to recognize the pressure that teachers are under and trying to help them through that
98%	Agreed	Q29 Principals with emotional understanding of self and others are more able to support teachers	<u>Mathias</u> : Trying to make things manageable for staff and for students, advocating on their behalf, helping them in any way that you can, whether it's supplying resources or professional development or that same mentorship that others have given you over time



**Table J.2**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Encouraging Peers to Learn from Peers**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
100%	Agreed	Q20 Teachers need to see themselves as part of a learning organization	#28: A school climate of trust, shared leadership and opportunity to take some risks needs to be the norm
100%	Agreed	Q21 Internal accountability at the school level, for what students learn, is essential for school improvement	#42: The best PD and accountability structures are those that provide professionals with opportunities to move forward together <u>Urban 2 IP</u> : There is an inherent internal accountability for student learning
92%	Agreed	Q22 Shared leadership includes matching the needs of the school with the expertise of those involved	<u>Ryan</u> : I really believe in a shared leadership kind of model <u>Alex</u> : Give them professional development in those areas to support then providing leadership <u>Daniel</u> : I think trying to disperse [later self-corrected to distribute] the leadership is one of the really important ones
98%	Agreed	Q23 Principals must encourage all teachers to engage in learning with their peers	<u>Alex</u> : Cohesive groups that are working together to improve practice and student learning
100%	Agreed	Q24 Principals need to model the professional behaviour they expect from staff	<u>Anne</u> : What I think makes a good leader is always being willing to learn yourself
78% 2%	Agreed Disagreed	Q25 Principals need to take the time to involve parents in decision-making about school improvement	<u>Anne</u> : I keep them informed.... they try to come up with ideas to support it <u>Urban 1 IP</u> : I don't ask the parents so much as to what should be in the planning document but I bring evidence of why we are doing what we are doing to do in the planning document <u>Rural 2 IP</u> : You can only have parents involved to a certain point <u>Urban 2 IP</u> : [Parents say] We like receiving information, we like the opportunity to have input

**Table J.3**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Deepening Learning about Instruction**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
94%	Agreed	Q30 Informed judgments need to be the basis of staff decisions about instruction	<p><u>Peter</u>: We're slowly coming around to the acceptance of what research show and research is based on data</p> <p><u>Bradley</u>: Making instructional decisions based on data and on best practices</p> <p><u>Spencer</u>: Lack of time or lack of adequate training for teachers to understand and interpret those [test] results</p>
100%	Agreed	Q31 Principals need to nurture a school culture that seeks ongoing instructional improvement	<p><u>Alex</u>: We're actually focused on what will benefit our students</p> <p><u>Cindy</u>: I think we've come a long way but we still have a way to go</p>
96%	Agreed	Q32 Principals must avoid 'one size fits all' models	<u>Jack</u> : We've fallen into the trap as educators...of believing that there's always one best method to do anything
86%	Agreed	Q33 The principals must guide each staff member to further develop his/her instructional skills	<p><u>Anne</u>: There's a lot more sharing and reflecting going on</p> <p><u>Urban 2 IP</u>: What they are doing collegially is probably bigger than the influence that I might have</p>
96%	Disagreed	Q34* Low socioeconomic status will defeat all teacher efforts to bring about improved academic achievement	
100%	Agreed	Q 35 The principal needs to ensure that regular monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of student achievement is conducted	<u>Ryan</u> : The depth of understanding and the amount being accomplished as increased

\*Reverse scored question

**Table J.4**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Developing Leadership in Others**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
86%	Agreed	Q36 Principals should plan how leadership responsibilities/opportunities will be distributed in their school	<b>Mathias:</b> Recognizing and providing opportunities for leadership in your school and encouraging the potential leaders in your building <b>#41:</b> A principal's opportunities for distributed leadership depend greatly on the leadership qualities in the professionals in the building <b>#39:</b> Leadership development in my school division is essentially in the form of seminars and meetings for those already in the positions
100%	Agreed	Q37 Principals need to model shared leadership	<b>#14:</b> The administrative team at the school level needs to model shared leadership
94%	Agreed	Q38 Total collective leadership within the school has more impact on student learning that formal leadership alone	<b>Urban 2 IP:</b> If the teachers aren't going to take it on themselves ... it's pretty hard to drive instructional improvement
86%	Agreed	Q39 Principals must carefully consider the leadership maturity of each teacher	<b>#26:</b> It takes time to become aware of the leadership strength available in a school

**Table J.5**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Changing the Work Context and Culture**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
100%	Agreed	Q40 Learning needs to occur at all levels: student, teacher, parent, and administrator	#53: Schools should be a community of learners, working together to improve student learning
98%	Agreed	Q41 teachers need to be valued as professionals	Alex: [Becoming] more research based in looking at teacher practice Robert: We're on the road to becoming true professionals
100%	Agreed	Q42 Depending on the context of the school, principals may need to carry out leadership tasks differently	#21: Each neighbourhood has its own unique characteristics, what works in one school may not work as well in another #2: In some schools there is more time that can be devoted to sustainable leadership
96%	Agreed	Q43 Teacher professional autonomy includes taking collective responsibility for student learning	Ryan: The whole dialogue on student learning will improve instruction Bradley: We're asking you to collaborate because we firmly believe the research, that clearly shows that it is going to have a positive impact on student learning.
96%	Agreed	Q44 Principals must ensure that adequate supports, such as professional development, teaching materials, and planning time, are provided	Alex: Professional development has improved the learning culture in the school
100%	Agreed	Q45 Principals must maintain a strong emphasis on collaboration with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, and community members	Daniel: I think we're trying to make it so. I think it's a huge big shift for people #49: The principal cannot effectively lead a school in isolation Alex: You need everybody to be on board with what's expected

**Table J.6**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Working Together to Address Accountability**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
92%	Agreed	Q46 A recognition of interdependence, by those working to improve education, is necessary in order to support effective school improvement	<u>Peter</u> : There's more collaboration between teachers, at different grade levels, and at the same grade level, within the building and somewhat outside the building
94%	Agreed	Q47 Teachers, principals, special education consultants, central office administrators, trustees, and government representatives need to work together to establish reasonable goals	<u>Spencer</u> : 20% of your time....would be spent on leadership for learning
100%	Agreed	Q48 The principal's leadership is crucial for school improvement	<u>Alex</u> : You are also that pivotal person who has to be able to meet the needs and bring together all the various stakeholders <u>#13</u> : [The position] requires a strong individual with a clear sense of what is important to student achievement and a vision of equity for all
100%	Agreed	Q49 Positive, respectful, working relationships need to be established at all levels and between levels within the educational system	<u>Cindy</u> : Building a team has been really critical

**Table J.7**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Doing What's Right for Students**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
94%	Agreed	Q10 Principals need to keep the primary focus in the school on improving teaching and learning	<b>Jack:</b> What's going to ultimately improve their [students'] learning and ultimately improve their chances to succeed <b>#53:</b> Building time to collaborate and focus on student learning needs to be a priority for the principal <b>Urban 1 IP:</b> That is now the corporate message
6% 92%	Disagreed Agreed	Q11* Principals should always focus on the success of students in their own school	<b>Urban 1 IP:</b> It's a growing area [one we are working to change]
96%	Agreed	Q12 Principals need to provide leadership for the development of a school vision	<b>Ryan:</b> I think our job is...to set the direction <b>Bradley:</b> [SCC] can definitely have a lot to say in terms of the direction of the school <b>Bradley:</b> [SCC can make]significant gains in terms of being engaged more about the learning agenda in the school
100%	Agreed	Q13 Principals must ensure teachers focus on instruction that helps all students to be successful in their learning	<b>Cindy:</b> Teachers contribute a lot to how things are done here and the whole teaching process
98%	Agreed	Q14 It is important to support student learning that requires higher order thinking skills	
52% 12%	Agreed Disagreed	Q15 Principals need to consider how specific actions they plan to implement will affect students in other schools	<b>X Rural 1:</b> We've been encouraged to have very parochial thinking <b>Urban 2 IP:</b> You are not too concerned about how what you do in your building might affect students in other buildings

\*Reverse scored question

**Table J.8**  
**Sustainable Leadership: Taking the Long-Term View Without Sacrificing Immediate Goals**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
88%	Agreed	Q16 An important part of the principal's work is to align the vision of the school with the vision of the school division	<u>Urban 1 IP</u> : We work really hard at making sure everything aligns <u>Daniel</u> : The provincial Continuous Improvement Framework, through the school division's...Continuous Improvement Plan to our school based Learning Improvement Plan to actually the teacher's Professional Development Plan <u>Spencer</u> : I find that to be a real demanding part of my job
38% 20%	Disagreed Agreed	Q17* The primary goal of authentic school improvement is improved test scores	<u>Rural 2 IP</u> : But there's such a focus on it [test results] <u>Urban 1 IP</u> : [Has] taken on a new prominence...that is going to become more and more paramount <u>#6</u> : Standardized tests cannot be the sole indicator of school improvement
100%	Agreed	Q18 It takes time for teachers to develop the capacity to make necessary instructional changes	<u>Anne</u> : I am trying to change things but at a rate that is acceptable for my staff
92%	Agreed	Q19 Equal effort must be invested in professional development and accountability for student learning	
		General Comment	<u>Spencer</u> : That's something we don't spend enough time on. <u>Alex</u> : Most recent initiatives on our division have been long-term

\*Reverse scored question

**Table J.9**  
**Succession-Planning Practices: Professional Development for Teachers**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
38% 44%	Agreed Disagreed	Q52 The criteria for formal leadership positions are clearly communicated to all teachers in the school division	<u>Urban 1 IP</u> : They never told anybody...this is what we're looking for
74%	Agreed	Q53 Teachers are given many opportunities to lead in the area of improving instruction	<u>Peter</u> : The reason I'm asking them is I know they can do it and handle it.
62% 18%	Agreed Disagreed	Q54 Principals in the school division are expected to discuss career plans with each teacher on a regular basis (at least annually)	
48% 18%	Agreed Disagreed	Q55 Nurturing the long-term potential of employees is valued in your school division	<u>Bradley</u> : What is offered to teachers in the past ten years has been significantly different <u>#1</u> : There must be a clear plan in place to nurture interest and develop understanding and support growth in individuals to take leadership positions <u>Ryan</u> : It's one of the best PD pieces that I have seen because it's supportive and it's continual
78%	Agreed	Q56 There are opportunities to develop leadership at different levels, beginner to advanced	<u>#8</u> : Principals are encouraged to mentor staff members who are interested in administration work



**Table J.10**  
**Succession-Planning Practices: Recruitment to Formal Leadership Positions**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
38% 38%	Agreed Disagreed	Q57 Criteria for the formal leadership position of elementary school principal are clearly established in the school division	<b>Jack:</b> Administrative appointments and selection in our division in the past few years....appear to be done randomly <b>#42:</b> There does not seem to be a clearly defined leadership model
54% 22%	Agreed Disagreed	Q58 The school division is able to attract a high-quality pool of candidates to the elementary school principalship	<b>Rural 2 IP:</b> They've done some good ground work on that one this year <b>Spencer:</b> Supports are being put in place for ones that are looking towards administrative positions <b>#32:</b> The division is not very well prepared to deal with this issue and will have a major problem filling these positions
62% 12%	Agreed Disagreed	Q59 Selection committees are inclusive with respect to gender, race, and culture when selecting candidates for the elementary school principalship	<b>X Urban 1:</b> Using a research based model that would help us to be informed about the kinds of people that we would like to see in our formal leadership [positions]
78%	Agreed	Q60 External candidates are considered for formal leadership positions	<b>Rural 2 IP:</b> Take people who are here and support them and give them the opportunity
8% 82%	Disagreed Agreed	Q61* Many teachers see the position of the principal as one of trying to meet never-ending demands	<b>Rural 2 IP:</b> [Teachers see] the principal acts as a buffer between central office staff, the initiatives and the staff <b>Rural 2 IP:</b> [Teachers]Don't want to be dealing with that stuff [discipline issues] <b>Urban 1 IP:</b> Duty first, family second [not accepted]

\*Reverse scored question

**Table J.11**  
**Succession-Planning Practices: Professional Development for Principals**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
74%	Agreed	Q62 Principals understand the importance of good communication, between the principal who is leaving a school and the newly appointed principal, to ensure appropriate continuity for school improvement	
34% 42%	Agreed Disagreed	Q63 Principals are offered adequate support in maintaining a focus on instruction while concurrently working on the day-to-day operations of the school	<b>#53</b> Our school division has recognized a need to develop leadership and has worked on implementing ‘Leadership for Learning’ <b>X Rural 2:</b> Nobody thinks they should take a look at the amount of discipline, the behavioural issues, the nature of kids, at risk students [when deciding vice principal placements) <b>#42:</b> Sustainable leadership necessitates formal and informal support networks for those in leadership roles
54% 16%	Agreed Disagreed	Q64 Adequate professional development regarding data management is offered to principals	<b>Peter:</b> It does not make us experts or true leaders in that but it does give us a thumbnail of the direction <b>Bradley:</b> Have had many, many workshops at our leadership meetings on data analysis and making sense of data
32% 44%	Agreed Disagreed	Q65 in our school division, a clear plan has been established to help principals nurture leadership skills early in each teacher’s career	<b>X Rural 1:</b> We haven’t had the opportunity to have leadership nurtured at our local level
42% 32%	Agreed Disagreed	Q66* A principal is often left alone ‘to just do the job’ without the necessary divisional support to develop the required administrative skills	<b>#42:</b> Once selected to this position, I was left to learn on my own <b>Urban 2 IP:</b> I think there are lots of gaps

\*Reverse scored question

**Table J.12**  
**Succession-Planning Practices: Retention of School Principals**

Quantitative Data			Qualitative Data
%	Response	Survey Questions	Survey Comments, Interpretive Panels, Interviews
40% 28%	Agreed Disagreed	Q67 Principals remain in the same school five or more years to ensure the changes are well established	<u>Urban 2 IP</u> : We are almost at a point, if you have been in a school five years, people are thinking something's wrong
48% 18%	Agreed Disagreed	Q68 It is recognized in our school division that principals need opportunities for rejuvenation	<u>Urban 2 IP</u> : There are not enough hours in the day to do all that you are being asked to do
30% 28%	Agreed Disagreed	Q69* Due to high stress levels, an increasing number of principals are choosing early retirement	<u>Rural 1 IP</u> : I'm ready to do something different and I haven't had the opportunity
18% 50%	Agreed Disagreed	Q70 The rewards and recognition given to principals encourage them to continue their work	<u>Rural 2 IP</u> : I'd say we get thank-yous and that's about it <u>Urban 2 IP</u> : I think part of this has to do with the individual's views of career advancement <u>Cindy</u> : The reward come for the daily work that we do.
28% 42%	Agreed Disagreed	Q71 Principals are involved in transfer decisions about their own assignment to a different school	<u>X Rural 1</u> : Everyone's experience is something different in our system <u>#14</u> : There seems to be very little foreshadowing <u>#25</u> : There appears to be little discussion with principals about their placements <u>Urban 1</u> : There hadn't been any consultation
		General Comment	<u>Peter</u> : [Many principals who retire] take another administrative position somewhere else <u>#6</u> : Apathy is not the answer in the recruitment or retention of in-school administrators

\*Reverse scored question

## **Appendix K**

### **Kruskal Wallis Tests**

**Table K. 1A**  
**Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Context by School Division**

Sustainable Leadership		Rural 1 n=9	Urban 1 n=19	Rural 2 n=14	Urban 2 n=8	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q25	Involving parents	M 3.78 SD .667	M 4.47 SD .513	M 3.43 SD .646	M 4.25 SD .707	p < .000*
Q14	Higher order thinking skills	M 4.33 SD .500	M 4.89 SD .315	M 4.43 SD .646	M 4.50 SD .535	p < .017*
Q16	Alignment	M 4.00 SD 1.000	M 4.63 SD .496	M 4.00 SD .555	M 4.00 SD .756	p < .026*
Q38	Collective leadership	M 4.11 SD .333	M 4.63 SD .597	M 4.14 SD .663	M 4.63 SD .518	p < .024*
Q45	Collaboration at the local level	M 4.44 SD .527	M 4.74 SD .452	M 4.63 SD .497	M 4.88 SD .354	p < .042*
Q11	Focus on own students	M 1.89 SD .601	M 1.47 SD .964	M 1.50 SD .519	M 2.00 SD .929	p < .066**
Q23	Teachers learning with peers	M 4.44 SD .527	M 4.89 SD .315	M 4.57 SD .514	M 4.38 SD 1.061	p < .075**
Q35	Monitoring student achievement	M 4.22 SD .441	M 4.63 SD .631	M 4.29 SD .469	M 4.62 SD .518	p < .080**

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 1B**  
**Significant Differences in Current Succession-Planning Practices: Context by School Division**

Succession-Planning Practices		Rural 1 n=9	Urban 1 n=19	Rural 2 n=14	Urban 2 n=8	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q58	Pool of candidates	M 3.56 SD 1.333	M 3.79 SD .713	M 2.71 SD .825	M 3.75 SD 1.165	$p < .010^*$
Q53	Leadership opportunities	M 3.89 SD .782	M 3.63 SD .684	M 4.07 SD .730	M 4.50 SD .756	$p < .015^*$
Q67	5 years in a school	M 3.6 SD .500	M 3.11 SD 1.048	M 3.36 SD .633	M 2.50 SD 1.069	$p < .032^*$
Q61	View of the principal's role	M 2.33 SD .707	M 2.05 SD 1.079	M 1.57 SD .646	M 2.38 SD .744	$p < .043^*$
Q65	Nurture leadership skills	M 3.2 SD 1.202	M 2.63 SD 1.012	M 2.57 SD .938	M 3.63 SD 1.302	$p < .084^{**}$
Q55	Long-term potential	M 3.56 SD 1.014	M 3.63 SD .955	M 2.79 SD .975	M 3.75 SD 1.035	$p < .089^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 2A**  
**Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Context by School Level**

Sustainable Leadership		K-8 n=37	K-12 n=8	Other n=5	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q17	Test results	M 3.51 SD .961	M 2.88 SD .641	M 2.80 SD 1.304	$p < .005^*$
Q18	Capacity building	M 4.49 SD .507	M 4.38 SD .518	M 4.00 SD .000	$p < .062^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 2B**  
**Significant Differences in Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership: Context by School Level**

Use of Components		K-8 n=37	K-12 n=8	Other n=5	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peers	M 2.76 SD .495	M 2.14 SD .690	M 2.20 SD .837	$p < .013^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 3A****Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Context by Socioeconomic Status of School Community**

Sustainable Leadership		Low n=10	Middle n=34	High n=6	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q39	Leadership maturity	M 3.70 SD .483	M 4.21 SD .641	M 4.50 SD .548	$p < .030^*$
Q30	Informed judgment	M 4.20 SD .632	M 4.24 SD .554	M 4.83 SD .408	$p < .045^*$
Q44	Supports	M 4.70 SD .675	M 4.53 SD .662	M 4.17 SD .408	$p < .091^{**}$
Q42	Context affects leadership	M 4.60 SD .516	M 4.38 SD .493	M 4.83 SD .408	$p < .092^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 3B****Significant Differences in Current Succession-Planning Practices: Context by Socioeconomic Status of School Community**

Succession-Planning Practices		Low n=10	Middle n=34	High n=6	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q54	Teachers career plans	M 4.50 SD .527	M 3.41 SD 1.209	M 3.67 SD .816	$p < .025^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level



**Table K. 4A**  
**Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Context by Community Population**

Sustainable Leadership		<5000 n=20	5000-25000 n= 2	>25,000 n= 28	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q25	Involving parents	M 3.60 SD .681	M 4.50 SD .707	M 4.29 SD .659	$p < .005^*$
Q17	Test results	M 2.90 SD .852	M 3.0 SD .000	M 3.68 SD .983	$p < .022^*$
Q22	Shared leadership	M 4.70 SD .470	M 5.0 SD .000	M 4.29 SD .713	$p < .054^{**}$
Q18	Capacity building	M 4.25 SD .444	M 5.0 SD .000	M 4.50 SD .509	$p < .056^{**}$
Q29	Emotional understanding	M 4.50 SD .513	M 4.0 SD .000	M 4.68 SD .548	$p < .099^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 4B**  
**Significant Differences in Current Succession-Planning Practices: Context by Community Population**

Succession-Planning Practices		<5000 n=20	5000-25000 n= 2	>25,000 n= 28	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q63	Support to maintain focus	M 3.30 SD 1.031	M 1.50 SD .707	M 2.82 SD 1.020	$p < .043^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 5A****Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Years of Experience as a Principal**

Sustainable Leadership	< 1 Year n=1	1–5 Years n=25	6–10 Years n=11	10 or More Years n=13	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q17 Test results	M 2.0 SD --	M 2.92 SD .759	M 3.91 SD .831	M 3.77 SD 1.092	$p < .005^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table L. KB****Significant Differences in Current Succession-Planning Practices: Years of Experience as a Principal**

Succession-Planning Practices	< 1 Year n=1	1–5 Years n=25	6–10 Years n=11	10 or More Years n=13	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q66 Lack of support	M 4.00 SD --	M 3.44 SD .961	M 2.36 SD 1.027	M 3.23 SD 1.092	$p < .049^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\* Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 6A****Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Principal's Years at the Current School**

Sustainable Leadership	0—2 Years n=19	3—4 Years n=17	5—6 Years n=9	7 or More Years n=5	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q32 Diversity of models	M 4.79 SD .419	M 4.41 SD .681	M 4.22 SD .667	M 5.00 SD .000	$p < .016^*$
Q42 Context affects leadership	M 4.74 SD .452	M 4.24 SD .437	M 4.33 SD .500	M 4.60 SD .548	$p < .019^*$
Q26 Professional networks	M 4.05 SD .524	M 4.06 SD .429	M 4.11 SD .333	M 3.20 SD .837	$p < .035^*$
Q35 Monitoring	M 4.68 SD .478	M 4.24 SD .437	M 4.44 SD .527	M 4.40 SD .548	$p < .065^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 6B****Significant Differences in Current Succession-Planning Practices: Principal's Years at the Current School**

Succession-Planning Practices	0—2 Years n=19	3—4 Years n=17	5—6 Years n=9	7 or More Years n=5	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q70 Rewards and recognition	M 2.79 SD .976	M 2.76 SD .664	M 1.89 SD .601	M 2.40 SD 1.342	$p < .066^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level

\*\*Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 7A**  
**Significant Differences in Knowledge of Components of Sustainable Leadership: Principal's Gender**

Sustainable Leadership		Male n=26	Female n=24	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q20	Learning organization	M 4.62 SD .496	M 4.88 SD .338	$p < .038^*$
Q34	Socioeconomics defeat teacher efforts	M 4.42 SD .578	M 4.62 SD .875	$p < .053^{**}$
Q28	Pressure/support	M 4.42 SD .504	M 4.67 SD .565	$p < .068^{**}$
Q23	Teachers learning with peers	M 4.50 SD .707	M 4.79 SD .415	$p < .096^{**}$
*Significant at the .05 level      **Marginally Significant at the .10 level				

**Table K. 7B**  
**Significant Differences Current Succession-Planning Practices: Principal's Gender**

Succession-Planning Practices		Male n=26	Female n=24	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q61	View of the principal's role	M 2.23 SD .863	M 1.79 SD .884	$p < .035^*$
Q67	5 years in a school	M 3.38 SD .941	M 2.96 SD .859	$p < .090^{**}$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\*Marginally Significant at the .10 level

**Table K. 7C**  
**Significant Differences in Use of the Components of Sustainable Leadership: Principal's Gender**

Use of Components		Male n=26	Female n=24	Level of Significance Kruskal Wallis Test
Q75	Encouraging peers to learn from peers	M 2.40 SD .645	M 2.83 SD .482	$p < .005^*$
Q80	Maintaining a cycle of of positive energy	M 2.73 SD .452	M 2.42 SD .504	$p < .026^*$

\*Significant at the .05 level      \*\*Marginally Significant at the .10 level